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BANARAS

A SAINT OF MODERN INDIA

[Glimpses into the life of Sri T. L. Vaswani]

VOLUME ONE

By
Hari P. Vaswani

GITA PUBLISHING HOUSE,
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IMPORTANT

Kindly note that this is a combined issue for the four months, January 1973 to April 1973.

Our next issue will be out in the month of May 1973. The delay in publishing this Special Number is deeply regretted.

—The Manager.

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Sri T. L. VASWANI

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Sindhu Desa

The lofty Himalayas with their snow-clad summits seek to kiss the skies overhead. Gazing at these peaks, men are filled with the noble aspiration to kiss the Lotus-feet of the Lord and to become one with the Divine. From one such snow-covered peak emerges the river Sindhu. Winding its majestic way through Kashmir, rightly called "Paradise on earth",—and the Punjab,—"The land of five waters",—it flows in beauteous abundance through Sind,—the land through which flows the river Sindhu.

The sunlit Sind has had a glorious past. It was once the seat of the most amazing and oldest civilisation, now named the Mohan-jo-daro civilisation. Its dominion at one time included also Kashmir, the Punjab and Kathiawar. Inspired by the broad beauty of the mighty Sindhu, the rishis and sages of old have immortalised it by many a lofty hymn and inspiring tale in the Vedas.

Fourth century B. C. saw the Greeks come to India. Gazing at the waters of the Sindhu, pure and bright as the silver snow-covered Himalayan peaks from which it emerges, they called it the "Indu". The entire sub-continent they called "India", which meant the land of the Indu.

The desert of Sind may well be compared to a broad-bosomed ocean with which has mingled many a river of religion and faith,—Hinduism and Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Jainism,—all of which flourished in Sind at one time or the other.

Sind has had a rich heritage in her religion and culture, in her art and architecture and in her folk-lore and literature. It is also rich in the history and tradition of its towns. The valiant resistance of the people of Sewan to the armies of Alexander, the Great; immortal chastity of the seven sisters of Rohri commemorated by 'Satben'; healing Hot Springs at the Laki hills; amazing skill of the craftsmen of Hala whose woodwork and pottery were much sought after by the connoisseurs of art in Europe and the Middle East; marvellous beauty of the matchless mosaic work wrought by the internationally admired craftsmen of Thatta; exquisite carpets and silks of Shikarpur once famous in the international markets of Central Asia—these are just a few elements in the greater glory of the Land of the Sindhu.

Hyderabad is famous in the history of Sind. At one time, Hyderabad was ruled over by the Mirs; their tombs attract visitors even today. 'Mir' means great or noble, qualities which the Mirs possessed in abundance in many matters. The Muslim Pirs, mystics of Hyderabad, had followers amongst Muslims as well as Hindus.

The river Phuleli, a tributary of the Sindhu, flowing through Hyderabad, has lent an added charm and beauty to this town. The waters of the Phuleli, as they flow smoothly, murmur the age-long message of *Santi-Sakti*, of peace and strength.

Karachi, one of the most flourishing cities of Sind in recent times, became the capital of Pakistan immediately after the partition. This modern city, which before the partition was considered to be the cleanest city in the whole of the Indian sub-continent, is Pakistan's port of entry by air as well as sea. It is now one of the world's greastest ports, being at the cross-roads of important sea and air routes.

Pliny regarded Sind as an emporium of commerce. Patala in lower Sind and other towns of Sind carried on trade with Rome and Greece, with Asia Minor, Babylonia and Egypt.

Sind was also famous for ship-building. Even the Sultans of Constantinople ordered ships from Sind. Sind carried on trade by means of her trading vessels which went as far as Arabia in the West and Java in the East.

A number of enterprising Sindhi traders even immigrated to Java and other places and built colonies there. To these far-off lands they carried the torch of their culture and civilisation.

Sindhi *hakims* (doctors) and men of culture travelled to Baghdad and Arabia. Hindu scientists from Sind, well-versed in Sanskrit and astronomy, were employed in the royal court of Baghdad. They were held in high regard by the Khalifa and his court. The Arabs were greatly influenced by *Brahma Siddhanta*, a Sanskrit treatise, which the Sindhis carried to Arabia in the eighth century.

The hospitality of Sindhis is almost proverbial. Rana Wair Sail of Sind greeted the defeated King Humayun, kissed his stirrup and placed at his disposal his own castle.

Sindhis are well-built. The Sumras, the Sammas, Rajputs and Baluchis of Sind were brave and valiant. Even the women of Sind were known for their bravery. The daughters of King Dahir stood on the battle-field by the side of their father. At the Khatko Maho, several Sindhi women preferred a heroic death with their husbands rather than submit to the foreign invader.

The vision of Sind was wonderful and her soul noble, for she placed before herself the lofty ideal of brotherhood. In Sind, the Hindu and the Muslim mingled with each other in a spirit of brotherhood. Hindus and Muslims lived as neighbours in the same street. Like true neighbours, they participated in each other's functions including marriage celebrations and religious festivals.

Hindus in Sind participated in the Muharrum, the festival of the Muslims. They considered the *tabut* to be so very holy that they brought their new-born babes to it to be blessed. They also covered the *tabut* with their kerchiefs as a mark of respect and reverence.

Muslims in Sind sought the blessings of Hindu saints and visited the Hindu shrines, while Hindus paid homage to Muslim sufis and mystics.

Hindus in Sind served the Muslim rulers in a spirit of loyalty, while Muslim peasants served the Hindu zamindars faithfully.

Sind was thus the land of Hindu-Muslim unity.

In the whole of India, it was only in Sind that her rulers were influenced by sufi *dervishes* who beheld the One Light shining in people of all faiths. Accordingly, Hindu and Muslim subjects were treated alike by the rulers. Hindu-Muslim conflicts, which were common in other parts of India, were unheard of in Sind.

The soil of the sacred land of Sind has been sanctified from times immemorial by prophets and poets, scholars and singers, sufis and sages, *dervishes* and fakirs.

In the recent past, Sind has given birth to Shah Latif and Sa'ami, to Sachal and Rohal, to Beydil and Bekas. As these poet-saints communed with the Beautiful, they burst forth into songs which may well form an important part of the world's mystical literature.

The profound teaching of these poet-saints may be summed up in the words of Sri T. L. Vaswani:

"Commune with the mystery that is God, meditate on the love of God and grow in the life that is Life indeed!"

It was in this immortal Sindhu Desa that Sri T. L. Vaswani was born.

A Child of the Desert

Sri T. L. Vaswani was born on 25 November 1879 in Hyderabad, the most prominent cultural and educational centre of Sind in those days. What all transpired on that day, who can tell?

Truth is stranger than fiction, no doubt. But where facts fail regarding the birth of one, whose life is an endless stream of light, it is good to turn back the pages of the calendar and the hands of the clock. It is also in the fitness of things to soar on wings of imagination, which lends beauty, colour and charm, and visualise what happened at the time of his birth. It is likely that a scene of this sort occurred in the mud-house situated on that narrow winding lane where the Vaswani family dwelt.

A devout young lady had lain helplessly on her bed tossing the whole night. Her labour had told upon her. She was passing through the pangs, the throes of child-birth. It is likely she screamed at times to give vent to her suppressed feelings of pain and agony. Even as she did so, her young husband probably sat in the adjoining room, while their four-year old son slept the sleep of the just and the innocent, blissfully unaware that there was to be an addition.

The darkest hour preceding the dawn was about to depart when the lady said to herself in muffled tones: "Perhaps the time has arrived. But will it be a boy or a girl?"

"Has the time arrived for the child to see the light of this world?" questioned the husband as if in a nightmare. He, too, had passed a sleepless night as the dark hours had dragged on. The early mystic hour of four, when he should be praying, was at hand. And, there he was, waiting and watching, with anxiety writ large on his face.

"Will we be blessed with a boy or a girl? Agirl too will be most welcome, for we already have a boy," thought the anxious husband.

"The midwife should have been here a long time ago," thought the lady as her pains rose and subsided.

"Why has the midwife delayed?" worried the husband. "Thank God, my cousin-sister, Teeri's mother, is beside her in her hour of travail."

He then lifted his eyes heavenward and muttered these words to himself and to Goddess Kali at the same time: "How many expectant mothers have not succumbed to death at the time of delivery! O Mother Kali! Be gracious. Let the midwife be here at once. Delay is dangerous."

As if in answer to his silent, solemn and fervent prayer, there came a knock. Lilaram instantly got up from his charpoy (cot) and rushed towards the door to open it.

"Go inside immediately and do your best. And may God be with you and Varan!" spoke the distraught husband to the harried visitor who had just returned from another case. The midwife was ushered in while Lilaram paced about the room. It was a relief to know that little Pahlaj slept peacefully and a sweet smile flickered on his lips.

The dark curtains of the night were being withdrawn as the first streak of light hovered over the skies.

The dark clouds of agony soon vanished from the father's face as he heard the first faint cry announcing the birth of his second child, an angel.

And when an angel descends on earth, a new star arises in the firmament enhancing the effulgent glory of the galaxies around.

Teeri's mother soon brought the child, a son, out of the room and placed it in the father's eager arms. The father lovingly held the little one with a mixed feeling of pride and delight and softly imprinted a fond kiss upon his face.

Even as Lilaram looked into the mystic eyes of the little one, he became aware of the extraordinarily strange light with which they were aglow. Even as he beheld his broad, angelic, finely chiselled face and his beautifully well-proportioned form, as if of a Greek god, he felt that a heavenly being had blessed his home. Even as he touched his delicate limbs his whole being throbbed with ecstasy. Something from within told him that this second son of his had a divine destiny to fulfil. Something from within assured him that the charming child had come to this earth with a mission; that in life's game, the game of give and take, he would give more than he would receive; that he would surround the rich and poor alike with the warmth and the sunshine of love and compassion.

The father was absorbed in these thoughts when he was wakened as if from a reverie. His cousin-sister roused him from his day-dream by asking him to give back the child. Once again the father took stock of the tiny form of flesh and clay, through whose veins flowed his blood and of his beloved Varan. And once again he got the feeling that the child was unique in every way,—in features and form, in body and mind, in heart and soul.

All this came to pass on 25 November 1879, the sacred *Kartik Ekadashi* day.

Six days later, the family Brahmin came with his paraphernalia to cast the child's horoscope and to give him a name. While the Brahmin recited *mantras* and went on with the ceremony the little boy, Pahlaj, looked on with amusement.

The new child was named Thanwar, which means balanced or firm. True to his name, Vaswaniji remained poised and firm throughout his life, even when storms assailed him. Nothing could shake his faith in God, so firm and deep-rooted it was.

The family Brahmin declared that his ruling star was Jupiter. It is believed that children, born under the influence of Jupiter, become virtuous and respected. They are usually religious-minded and are held in reverence by people. They are blessed with a long and noble life.

It is good to imagine, for no one can say with certainty unless the inner eye be opened, that at the *nam-karan* ceremony, among the celestials present were the invisible spirits of the saints, sages and prophets of the East and the West. As these heavenly beings hovered over the child, they breathed benedictions upon him in abundance. Was it because they knew that he was a child of grace? Was it because they were aware that the child would grow up and become an instrument of the Holy Spirit? Was it because they were certain that the child would advance in years and spread their message,—the message of Light to a world plunged in darkness?

Varandevi and Lilaram gave birth to three more children, a daughter, Papur, and two sons, Manghan and Awat.

The old town of Hyderabad, where Vaswaniji was born, is criss-crossed by narrow, winding lanes, which were unpaved and had open drainage on either side. Houses were mostly built of mud with no proper sanitation. People washed their clothes and bathed at the community taps installed at the corners of streets. After the bath, men and children would fill pitchers and buckets with water and take them for use in their homes. But owing to a holy aura that enveloped child Vaswani, the hearts of those around him became filled with love and reverence for him. Children and adults alike would move aside to give him priority at the water tap.

The Hindus of Hyderabad in those days comprised of two major communities, the Bhaibunds and the Amils.

Vaswaniji was born in the Amil community.

Life in Hyderabad was contented and peaceful. If the English bard sang: "Ye stately homes of England!" the Sindhi poets might well have been inspired to say: "Ye happy homes of Hyderabad!" A feeling of harmony pervaded every home. Members of joint families were knit in bonds of love.

Though poverty did exist in quite a few homes, its rigours were not felt, thanks to the spirit of charity among the relatives and neighbours. Those favoured by fortune considered it their moral duty to serve their less fortunate brethren. Pious as they were, they believed not only in loving God, but also in loving their neighbours.

Vaswaniji's mother, Varandevi, was a pious and God-fearing woman. An ardent devotee of Guru Nanak Dev, she knew by heart the whole of Sri Japji Sahib sung by the great Guru. She could recite Sri Sukhmani Sahib which Guru Arjun Dev had sung.

Though devoid of formal education, Varandevi was highly enlightened and brought up her children in an atmosphere of piety and discipline. She would get up at an early hour of the dawn, and soon stand before the picture of Guru Nanak, hung on one of the walls of her room. After seeking the blessings of the great Guru, she would pass her hand over the picture and touch the face of each child with it. She wanted all her children to receive the blessings of Guru Nanak.

Vaswaniji had the highest reverence for his mother. A "Child of the desert", as he called himself, he described his love for his mother in the touching words of the poet, Shah Abdul Latif, who according to him, "remains the peerless poet of my homeland, the desert":

Mother ! My heart ever remembers thee,

Mother! Each breath of my being thinks of thee!

Child Vaswani was in the habit of going to the terrace in the quiet hour before dusk to gaze at the evening star. Once his mother, who also happened to be there, saw him looking intently at the single, solitary star shining in the limitless sky.

"My child," she affectionately asked pointing to the lonely star, "do you know that this star is called the Dhruva star?"

"Why is it called the Dhruva star, mother?" he asked.

"There is a long story behind this star," replied Varandevi. "Would you like to hear it?"

"Certainly, mother," said the son.

And in her own simple style Varandevi narrated the story of Prince Dhruva.

In the days of yore there was a king named Uttanpada. He had a queen named Sunita. Prince Dhruva was their son.

The Queen, being pious and devout, did not care much for the comforts and pleasures of worldly life. She spent most of her time in meditation and prayer. But the King was keen on enjoying life. He wanted his life-companion to devote her time and attention in enjoyment with him. He felt miserable when he saw her ignoring his needs and spending most of her time in meditation and prayer.

The King's ministers, seeing his condition, persuaded him to remarry. The King soon consented and the second marriage was arranged. Surchi, the new bride, was a beauty. She spent most of her time in the King's company and soon bore him a son who was named Uttam. King Uttanpada became greatly attached to the new Queen and Prince Uttam.

When Prince Dhruva reached the age of five, he once went to his father's court. He found the King and his fair consort seated on the throne. Seeing his younger brother seated on the King's lap, he too went and sat beside Prince Uttam. This innocent act of Prince Dhruva irritated the new Queen whose heart was smitten with jealousy. She lost her temper and shouted out in rage: "How dare you sit on the King's lap? You are not worthy of his love. Prince Uttam alone has the right to it as I have given birth to him. Envy not your younger brother, but go and sit on your mother's lap."

Dhruva burst into tears, rushed out of the court and ran straight to his mother. King Uttanpada did not utter a word as he did not wish to displease his favourite Queen.

Queen Sunita, seeing her son weeping profusely, inquired the cause. Dhruva unburdened his heart to his mother and asked : "Mother dear! Have I no claim to my father's throne? Is only Prince Uttam worthy of father's love?"

"Child, you have the first claim to the royal throne, since you are the first-born son of the King," said the mother. "But the King loves Queen Surchi and Prince Uttam more than he loves us. Therefore your younger brother will succeed the King."

"Mother, what may I do to get my right to the throne?" inquired Prince Dhruva.

"Child, if you will worship God with all your mind and all your heart and all your soul, you are sure to acquire a throne far superior to this worldly throne. You can gain Eternal Kingdom," said the spiritualy minded mother.

"How may I worship God, mother?" asked the five-year old Prince.

"Go to a forest, sit under a tree, meditate upon God and love and adore Him whole-heartedly. He is sure to bless you with His *darshana* (vision)," Queen Sunita told Dhruva.

The Prince went into deep thought for a brief moment and then spoke in a determined voice: "Mother, I have decided to leave the palace and worship God in a forest, till I am blessed with His *darshana*. Bless me, mother, that my efforts may soon be crowned with success."

The mother was staggered. Little did she know that her few simple words would affect her son's impressionable mind so deeply that he would decide to leave her and the palace. She tried to dissuade him from taking such a rash step at his tender age. But determined as he was, that very night the little Prince quietly slipped out of the palace and set out all alone for a far-off forest.

On the way, he met Sage Narada, who sought to persuade him to give up his quest and return to the princely life at the palace.

"You are yet a child," Narada told Dhurva. "How can you stay all alone in the forest which is full of wild beasts? And what about your food? You have been brought up in luxury. In the forest you will have to live upon fruits and herbs only, which you will have to pick with your own tiny, tender hands."

But Prince Dhruva was bent upon winning the favour of the Lord, come what may.

Rishi Narada's heart was deeply touched when he saw how firm the little child was. He blessed the Prince abundantly and went his way.

Prince Dhruva, who was a highly evolved soul, did not need to meditate for long to be blessed by the vision of the Lord. Selecting a quiet spot, he sat beneath a tree and began to meditate. He was soon absorbed into deep meditation, oblivious of his surroundings. He had sat in continuous meditation for a few days and nights only when Lord Narayana blessed him with a vision and granted him a boon.

During meditation, Dhruva's heart was filled with such peace and bliss that he lost all desire for worldly thrones. The Name of God appealed to him so much that he asked to be granted the gift of a sweet voice.

"I fain would chant Thy Name, Lord, and sing Thy praises!" exclaimed Dhruva.

Lord Narayana was so pleased that He touched Dhruva's throat and blessed him. And lo! sweet, sonorous strains poured forth from Dhruva's throat.

Little Dhruva at once started singing with deep devotion. Lord Narayana was so pleased with him that he granted him a throne of stars.

The evening star thus came to be called the Dhruva Star.

A highly evolved soul that child Vaswani was, he felt enthralled by this story. It is likely that in his imagination he traversed the forest with Dhruva and joined him in his penance and meditation, as he listened to his mother's narrative. It is also likely that he even beheld Lord Narayana as He revealed Himself to Dhruva. Child Vaswani came out of this world of imagination only when his mother blessed him and said: "Son! May you sing like Prince Dhruva! May you shine and ever shine as shines the Dhruva star from afar!"

The mother, their very first teacher, asked all her children to memorise passages from Sri Jap Sahib and Sri Sukhmani Sahib, the sacred Sikh scriptures. These scriptures, being the songs of the pilgrimage of life, are even today to be found in the home of every Sindhi Hindu.

In Hyderabad-Sind, these scriptures were read in all Hindu homes, mornings and evenings. The Vaswani children also recited these scriptures everyday. Food, according to the mother, was less important than recitations from the scriptures. The children had at times to forego their breakfast if they were not ready in time to go to school, but recitations from the scriptures were a "must".

Vaswaniji's father, Lilaram, a zamindar (land-owner), was well-versed in Persian and was fond of reading Hafiz and Rumi. As income from his land depended on the vagaries of nature, he had an uncertain life with periods of prosperity alternating with spells of adversity.When the land yielded plenty, he had enough and to spare. But when the yields were meagre, there was not enough even for a square meal a day for the family. When Vaswaniji was born, the family was in pecuniary straits.

Lilaram was a man of faith, of prayer and penance. A devotee of Kali, he would stand for hours together on one leg in worship. The Goddess, he said, had blessed him with her *darshana*.

While practising spiritual disciplines, devotees often develop psychic powers. Lilaram acquired the power of healing. Sick men and their relatives came to him from far and near. A number of them are believed to have been cured after receiving his blessings.

Vaswaniji was thus born of devout and God-loving parents, whose love and devotion for God in turn flowed through his veins. His noble soul flickered as a flame. It would gradually grow into an enormous light which would lead his people out of darkness into the Realm of Light.

The Child Sower

Time went by and the charming child Vaswani endeared himself to all those in whose contact he came. He had a very fair complexion; but fairer was his heart which was filled with love and compassion for all,—for human beings, for birds and animals, and for all nature.

He did not take delight in playing games and idle pranks as did children of his age. He rarely was found loitering in the streets with other children. Flowers and stars fascinated him more than marbles and spinning tops. He was very different from other children; he was a class by himself. He seemed to belong to the galaxy of illumined souls.

Flying kites was one of the few delights he shared with other children. It seemed as though his spirit longed to soar in the immensity of the limitless skies.

Colours, too, had an irresistible appeal to him as they do to every child. Dropping coloured lozenges and petals of flowers into bottles filled with water, he would watch with thrill and delight as the water got tinted with vivid colours.

When he was about six years of age he entered the Bakasrai Primary School. There was a butcher's shop on his way to school. He noticed this shop one day and beheld carcasses of goats and sheep with blood dripping from their entrails. Young and compassionate Vaswani was so shocked by the gory sight that he stood motionless. His satchel of books slipped from under his arm. Other school children, who were trailing behind him, stopped to inquire what the matter was.

"Why have these goats and sheep been killed and hung thus?" he asked them in child-like innocence.

Bursting with derisive laughter, his mates said: "Don't you know that animals are killed so that we may eat their flesh and grow strong?"

It distressed him deeply even at this tender age, when he found that dumb creatures were deprived of the precious gift of life, so that their flesh may provide food for human beings. He resolved, then and there, never again to partake of meat. On returning home, he forbade his mother to serve him meat in future. He also decided that, when he grew up, he would seek to infuse in others the spirit of mercy and compassion and inspire them to become vegetarians.

In those days, people believed that a meat diet alone made a person healthy and strong. His mother, too, was of this view. When she learnt of her son's resolve she felt that on vegetarian diet his health would break down. In order not to hurt her son's feelings, she decided to prepare for him a special dish, which would appear to be vegetarian but would contain meat.

Though child Vaswani had implicit faith in his mother, he could not be deceived for long. The mother gave herself away when Vaswani found a bone in the dish served him one day. He did not utter a word, but could not suppress his injured feelings. Silent suffering showed up in the form of tears which trickled down his cheeks.

Varandevi could not bear to see her son in anguish. She fondly embraced him, and gently wiping his tears said: "Son, it simply breaks my heart to see you shed tears."

Vaswani burst into sobs and exclaimed : "I least expected this from you, mother! Don't you know that I have resolved not to eat meat?"

"Forgive me, son. I solemnly promise not to give you meat in future," the mother said. "Won't you smile to assure your mother that you have forgiven her?" Her tone was one of entreaty.

A smile soon played upon child Vaswani's lips: he was so forgiving by nature.

Thenceforth, the mother kept her word and Vaswaniji remained a strict vegetarian all his life.

A similar incident repeated itself shortly. On the following Shivratri day, his father took him to the temple of Goddess Kali. The worship over, the mahant (priest) distributed prasad to the devotees. He was shocked to see that the prasad comprised of bits of raw sacrificial goats.

One question after another rose within his mind. Why did people kill animals? Why did they imagine God would be pleased with such inhumane sacrifices? Why did priests distribute such prasad with their own hands? God was good and loving, kind and compassionate. How absurd that live animals should be slaughtered in cold blood and offered as sacrifice at the altar to such a God !

He determined not to accept such prasad. When his turn came to receive it, he did not care to stretch forth his hands. The father, noticing his son's reluctance, affectionately patted him on the back and persuaded him to take prasad. But the boy seemed to have no intention of doing so.

Prasad is God's gift to man, through which divine blessings are showered upon him. How could his son, a mere child, commit such an act of sacrilege as to refuse to accept it, wondered the father. He must be made to take the prasad at any cost, else will he incur the wrath of Goddess Kali and the displeasure of the priest, said the father to himself.

The son, however, moved not an inch, nor did he open his lips. So he had grown so irreverent and insolent! How dared he refuse to accept prasad!

This infuriated the father. To add to it all, the father noticed that all eyes were riveted upon him and his son. Wild with indignation, he slapped his son and shouted for all to hear: "Leave the temple at once! You are not worthy to be here!"

Child Vaswani unquestioningly obeyed the parental command, heaving a sigh of relief.

Is it not passing strange that he, who would walk the way of Krishna and Christ, of Buddha and Mahavir, was compelled to leave the temple of Goddess Kali ? Is it not an irony of fate that he, whom myriads of men would worship in the temple of their hearts, was considered unworthy to join in the worship of Devi Kalka?

It was customary for Sindhi families to drink liquor on auspicious days like Shivratri. Even as a child, Vaswani regarded not only meat-eating but also drinking liquor morally wrong. On one such occasion, Vaswani's father, little knowing of his son's feelings, offered him a drink as custom demanded. Vaswani found himself in a dilemma. He was torn between his regard for his father and his resolves. He cast a pleading glance at his mother. The father, noticing his son's reluctance, held the glass to his lips. Breathing out a silent prayer that he be granted strength to be true to his resolve, the son gulped the drink down only to vomit it soon after. The father was surprised and dismayed. He realised that flesh and liquor were not meant for him.

On the sacred Shivratri days, fairs are held in practically every city, town and village of India. In the town of Hyderabad, the fair was held at Gidu-bunder on the bank of the Sindhu river.

Lilaram once took child Vaswani to the fair. The father affectionately asked his son to buy something. But the child was fond of neither toys nor sweets nor snacks, which are usually sold at the fair. The colourful balloons, however, caught his fancy and he asked his father to buy him a balloon.

With some excitement he started blowing into it.

The balloon grew bigger and bigger, till it burst. The child was shocked; he was soon on the verge of tears. Noticing his son's bewilderment and disappointment, the father consoled him by saying: "Son, the whole world is like a balloon which does not last long. All things perish like bubbles on the surface of water. Therefore, give your heart not to things of the world but to God."

Even as a school boy, Vaswani formed the habit of getting up early. Like a true Aryan, he would begin the day with a salutation to the sun. He believed profoundly in *surya-shakti* the vital force of which the sun is the source. He made it a point to offer this prayer everyday as he sought the blessings of the rising sun:

May the force of the sun protect my life,
And keep my heart pure and devoid of strife!

If the sun fascinated him, the beauteous moon bewitched him. He loved to go to the terrace of his house, especially on moon-lit nights. He would lift his eager eyes heavenward and let the surge of silvery stream strike an echo in his heart. The sight of the bright moon thrilled him so much that the strings of the harp of his heart would burst into melody. "O Lord! Make me pure as the moon!" was the prayer he offered.

Great, indeed, is the power of prayer. Rightly has it been said that prayer is the power that moves the hand that moves the world and brings deliverance.

Varandevi once disclosed to child Vaswani that one of their relatives had lost his job. As he had no resources to fall back upon, he was in pecuniary straits. Vaswani's tender heart was filled with compassion for this poor relative. That very night, when he repaired to the terrace, he prayed earnestly to God that the impoverished relative may soon secure a job.

This innocent and unselfish prayer was repeated by Vaswani night after night. For seven nights he knocked at God's door thus. On the eighth day this prayer bore fruit. The relative got a job on a monthly salary of forty rupees, a fortune in those days. When

Varandevi learnt about it, she passed on this happy news to her son.

"It is too good to be true, son! It is almost as if a miracle has happened," she said. Vaswani, who understood everything, merely smiled and remained silent.

Vaswani always showed excellent results all along his educational career. Even in the primary school, his teachers were impressed by his quiet temperament, his unostentatious and unassuming nature, and his selfless and receptive mind.

He came to be regarded as an ideal student and was loved by all teachers for his exemplary conduct. He, however, once became a victim to the wrath of one of his teachers.

While in class, a passing thought once brought a flicker of a smile to his face. By a strange coincidence, the teacher's eyes fell upon him at that very moment. The innocent smile on Vaswani's face irritated the teacher to such an extent that he was roughly spanked.

Vaswaniji never forgot this incident which occurred while he was yet a child.

When he grew up and took to educational activities, he founded the Mira Movement in Education. As this incident had been stamped upon his memory, he enjoined the staff of the Mira Schools never to handle the children harshly but to treat them with sympathy and love.

"A child is a centre of creative life," he said. "This needs to be opened as a flower is opened, gently, by sympathy, not force. Gentle forces are the best. Teachers of the right type are an urgent need, teachers who would use gently forces of sympathy and understanding to educate the pupils."

Even as a child, Vaswani was a lover of nature. Close to his mud-house stood a lake which he visited frequently. One evening he took some seeds of garlic and sowed them by the lake-side. Curiosity drew him nearly every evening towards the lake. One day his joy knew no bounds when he found the seeds sprouting from the soil. His tiny visible hands had sown the seeds! God's unseen hands had wrought the miracle of making them sprout. Thoughts such as these passed through his mind.

He enjoyed the sweet satisfaction of having done something, of having grown something. He enjoyed the still sweeter satisfaction of having been helped by the divine power. But this incident taught him the truth: As you sow, so shall you reap. Yes, he learnt the important lesson that by sowing wheat, rice cannot be reaped. Since something is to be done in life, since some seeds must needs be sown in the field of life, why not sow seeds of pure thoughts, sweet words and noble deeds?

Years later, Sadhu Vaswani, as he came to be known then, was addressing a huge gathering of people in Madras. Someone asked him: "Won't you kindly tell us who you are, Sadhuji?" Quick came the reply: "I am a farmer who seeks to sow seeds in human hearts."

The true maker of men must needs become a sower of seeds, a farmer. Like the sower in the parable of Jesus Christ, he must go on sowing seeds even though some may fall on rocky ground or by the wayside or be scattered among thorns. The sower scatters seeds in the hope that a few of them at least are sure to fall on the right soil and yield fruit in abundant measure.

The Boyhood Years

Vaswani was about eight years of age when he completed his primary education at the Bakasrai School. He showed brilliant results and was ready to join a secondary school.

In those days, in Hyderabad-Sind, a new high school called the Union Academy had just been started. Soon after graduating from the Calcutta University, Hiranand, who was yet in his early twenties, had decided to devote himself to the service of his community in the fields of Education, Culture and Social Reform. This ideal young man founded the Union Academy and became its first headmaster.

Inspired by the noble age-old traditions of India, where rishis in ashramas never accepted money for their services, Hiranand, too, did not draw any salary. He was supported by his elder brother, Navalrai, another saintly soul, who was the Senior Deputy Collector of Hyderabad-Sind.

Navalrai was greatly devoted to the Brahmo Samaj. After office hours, he would go straight to the Brahmo Mandir, which was virtually his home, where he spent the rest of his time.

Navalrai would pass every evening reading the

Guru Granth Sahib, which contains songs sung by the Sikh gurus and saints, compiled by Guru Arjun Dev and completed by Guru Gobind Singh.

The *guruvani* the utterances of the gurus, was held sacred by Sindhi Hindus and in many a home this holy scripture is still installed. Reading from the Guru Granth Sahib is a "must" in such homes every morning and evening. This is the worship they offer to the Divine.

There were quite a number of *gurudwaras*, too, in every town and city of Sind. Everyday a number of devout men and women would gather in the *garudwaras*, mornings and evenings, to listen to and imbibe the teachings of the gurus, which were expounded by the priests.

In the Brahmo Mandir of Hyderabad-Sind, too, the Guru Granth Sahib was installed. A number of devotees would gather there every evening and Navalrai would read out slokas from this sacred scripture and offer his interpretation. In Navalrai, there was a rare blend of scholarship and devotion. Among his admirers was Vaswani, who was attracted to him even while in his early teens. He would often go to the Brahmo Mandir to listen to this great and gifted yet humble man.

Navalrai's younger brother, Hiranand, was an idealist and believed that the purpose of education was not only the acquiring of a degree but also the building up of character. He felt sad that many educational institutions were run on commercial lines, instead of serving as temples of learning with service and sacrifice as their twin mottoes. According to him, "new education" was to be the basis of a "new humanity". This vision inspired him to found the Union Academy.

Apart from being the headmaster of the newly-founded school, Hiranand's multifarious activities embraced editing two weeklies and practising homeopathy. He also actively organised mass meetings to propagate against the then prevalent social evils.

Hiranand's religion was the religion of service. He would often visit the Civil Hospital of Hyderabad-

Sind and cheer up the lonely patients lying on sick-beds. His visits gladdened many hearts and lessened their suffering.

As he practised homoepathy, this young man of saintly character acquired the gift of healing. Though not a qualified doctor, he would cure many a patient who would come to him for treatment. Among the numerous persons to be blessed by the healing hand of Hiranand was Vaswani, whose eye-sight was growing weak. One day when he noticed this fact, he gave Vaswani some globules, which restored his normal eyesight. Though, in later years, Vaswaniji did an enormous amount of reading and writing, he never felt the need to wear spectacles till the end of his earth-life.

In the year 1892, the cholera epidemic broke out in Hyderabad-Sind. Thousands of men, women and children succumbed to death. People forsook their near and dear ones who were stricken by the malady and Fled to safer places.

Hiranand, whose religion in Vaswaniji's words, "was not a creed but golden deeds of love," did all he could to relieve the suffering of the people. Like a ministering angel, he went from door to door with his chest of medicines and treated the victims. Hiranand, the healer, gave not merely medicines to his patients but also comfort and consolation. His soothing words and loving touch worked greater wonders than the pills and potions he dispensed. Because of the saintly character and selfless services of the two brothers, Navalrai and Hiranand, to the community, they came to be called Sadhu Navalrai and Sadhu Hiranand. The very school Hiranand founded,—the Union Academy,—was renamed as Navalrai Hiranand Academy.

Vaswaniji had great reverence for Sadhu Hiranand. He once said about him:

"Brief and beautiful was his earth-life. It was a life devoted to the service of the people of Sind. It was a life dedicated to the glory of God.

"I saw Sadhu Hiranand years ago. I sat at his feet to learn what he taught in his simple, homely way. Stories he gave us, and lessons in history and poems and above all, the great poem of his life. It was a life full of tender grace and beauty and love.

"On the 14th of July, 1893, he passed away in Patna. I was a school-boy then. I felt then, as I feel now, that to know him was a benediction.

"He loved the poor and served the sick with singular devotion. And he realised that in daily prayer was given the power to serve. He realised, too, that worship was incomplete without service of the poor. This synthesis made his life beautiful.

"He lived no more than thirty years. He served Sind for a few years only. They were years abundantly blessed. Born in Hyderabad-Sind, he died in Bihar. His was the life of an humble soul. There are men who shine as meteors and pass away. Hiranand's life shines with a steady light.

"Young men pass University examinations and seek big jobs. Young men are out for 'careers'. Sadhu Hiranand consecrated his talents not to a career but to a cause."

When Lilaram took child Vaswani to the Union Academy for admission, Hiranand felt greatly impressed by the child. One great soul not unoften recognises another. Hiranand, therefore, showed a keen interest in child Vaswani. This reminds one of the relationship between Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Narendra Viswanath, later known as Swami Vivekananda. When the Saint of Dakshineshwar saw Narendra, he recognised him at first sight and love for his beloved disciple sprung within his heart.

Hiranand soon selected Vaswani as a prefect. In this capacity, it was Vaswani's duty to explain the rules and regulations of the Academy to every newly admitted student. The newcomers were told that they had to be truthful and honest. They were not supposed to quarrel with one another. It was compulsory for them to join in prayers.

Hiranand made it a point to introduce scholar

Vaswani to every important person who visited the Union Academy. He would, with a feeling of elation, say: "This pupil is remarkably brilliant and has an excellent character." Visitors could not help feeling impressed by Vaswani's handsome face and wonderful qualities of the head and heart.

Vaswani was a fluent speaker and his accent was perfect. He was always asked to appear on the stage and recite English poems. No school function was complete without a recitation from him.

At this stage of life, his near and dear ones began to observe a gradual transformation in Vaswani. A yearning for God and therefore for silence manifested itself. He began to remain more and more aloof in order to withdraw 'within the secret, inner chamber of his heart.' He became strangely fearless, for he would spend hours together all alone on the terrace in the darkness of night and commune with the spirit within.

His sensitive heart was stirred at that tender age when he read of the wonderful life of Jesus Christ. He was deeply moved when he came to the chapter dealing with the persecution of Jesus. He was shocked to find that Jesus was condemned to death, made to carry a heavy cross and further humiliated by being crucified betwixt two common thieves. His eyes brimmed with tears when he read that huge pointed spikes were hammered through the soft velvet hands and feet of Jesus on the cross. The words Jesus uttered looking towards the sky on the hill of Calvary: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" were indelibly impressed upon him. He burst into tears when he read that Jesus uttered the words. : "I thirst," and did not get a drop of water. This ordeal of Jesus prompted Vaswani to say:

O Thou, whose heart is athirst,
Accept this heart at Thy Lotus-Feet !

Vaswani gradually grew in the spirit of faith and reverence for Jesus Christ. When this came to his father's knowledge, he was afraid his son might embrace the

Christian faith. On more than one occasion the father expressed this fear to his son. Vaswani would, however, gently remark to him that love aimed not at conversion. Rather, it sought to strengthen faith in leading a pure life. "Bless me, father, that I may be true to my faith and never forget God, whom all saints worship and adore!" he would say.

With the passage of years Vaswani grew in spiritual insight and devotion to saints. He felt especially captivated by Jesus Christ as he read more and more about his life and teaching.

He was once seated in a garden, when he fell asleep and beheld Jesus in a dream. To quote him :

We spoke to each other.
Jesus said to me:
"Control thy mind,
Unfold thy heart,
That I man draw out tunes
From thy heart, even as a musician
Draws out melodies
From the strings
Of the sitar!"

The path of seekers after self is not a path strewn with roses. As the path of quest has to end in self-conquest, the seeker must needs enter upon a battle,—the battle of self-conquest. It requirers years of penance and struggle to be emptied of the little self, the ego. And Vaswaniji entered this field of battle at a very young age.

Vaswani read the life of St. Thomas of Acquinas which had a profound effect on his young mind. He was particularly impressed to learn that Acquinas used to flog himself with a cane whenever he was tempted to vice. Following the example of the Christian saint, Vaswani, too, kept a cane in his room and submitted himself to physical torture as a form of discipline, whenever vicious thoughts disturbed him.

Vaswani did not rest content with flogging himself with a cane. The "saint in the making" resorted to another still more rigorous discipline. He wore underneath his shirt a garland not of roses but of thorns. He would often pierce his tender body with thorns till blood oozed out. This way he sought to subdue his flesh, control his mind and strengthen his will-power.

On his way to school, Vaswani used to see beggars sitting by the roadside, asking for alms. He saw many a passer-by place a coin or two in the begging bowls of the fakirs or in the palms of their hands. His compassionate heart went out to these poor brethren and he, too, wished to serve the lowly and the down-trodden. Thus early in life, the spirit of charity was inculcated in his heart.

One day gathering his school-mates, the would-be orator spoke to them on the importance of compassionate service. "Let us serve the beggars by giving them at least some food to eat," he suggested. These words appealed to their sensitive minds and a "Band of Service" was formed. All members promised to bring some chappatis everyday for distribution amongst beggars.

In those days, people believed in the teaching of the Gita: "He who cooks for himself alone is a thief." Those were days of peace, prosperity and plenty, when bags of grain and tins of ghee were stored in every home. Every house-wife would prepare extra chappatis and vegetables to feed a beggar or two.

Members of the "Band of Service", therefore, had no difficulty in getting a few chappatis and even cooked vegetables from their mothers. With Vaswani as their leader, they felt greatly thrilled as they fed the beggars sitting by the roadside.

Vaswaniji stressed the importance of helping the needy and comforting the distressed. His compassionate nature may be gleaned from his own words:

Did you see him on the road?
Did you leave him with the load?

Throughout his life, Vaswaniji was moved to tears by the suffering of the poverty-stricken. His very face reflected the suffering he saw around him. His very smile had a tinge of their sorrow. One of the noblest teachings he has passed on is even this: "Service of the poor is the noblest worship of God." Yes, he prays well who loves well. He loves well who serves well. Love must serve, else it is not love.

Very early in life, Vaswani formed the habit of keeping a diary wherein everyday he would note down his thoughts and aspirations. One of the entries in his diary reads:

May stainless, pure my heart be,
And as the rose bloom in beauty!

This was probably one of the first inspiring thoughts he wrote. It was followed by countless other thoughts, all noble and sublime. They continue to serve as a source of inspiration and illumination to many hearts in many parts of India and the world.

"Life of my life! I shall ever try to make my heart pure, knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs," prayed Poet Tagore. Vaswaniji, too, laid great emphasis on purity. One of his oft-quoted sayings: "Purity is the crown of life," has become a watchword for students of St. Mira's educational institutions.

Vaswani became a member of the "Band of Hope" started by Hiranand, headmaster of the Union Academy. The Band of Hope was organised with a view to awaken the consciousness of people against the social evils of the day, such as drinking and gambling.

Hiranand would occasionally lead a procession of the student-members of the "Band of Hope", shouting slogans condemning the evil of drink as they marched through the streets and the bazaar of Hyderabad. Vaswani, too, joined in these processions.

One day as Vaswani was marching in one such procession, his father happened to see him shouting slogans. The father felt it was an affront to his dignity that his son should be seen going about the town shouting slogans like a street urchin. He immediately dragged his son out, took him home and locked him up in a room.

The procession was to terminate in the school in half an hour where the school function was to be held. Vaswani had to take part in this function. He had to recite a poem. He knew very well that his absence would be marked by his teachers and especially by his headmaster. He longed to be on the stage at the right time. So, from the innermost recesses of his pure heart rose a silent prayer in an effort to reach the ears of God. He knocked at God's door to implore that the door of his own room be flung open.

The father had an appointment with his cousin, Tekchand. He, therefore, handed over the keys to his wife, Varandevi, and left.

Which mother would like such a docile son to remain in solitary confinement! No sooner was her husband out of sight than she unlocked the door and fondly embraced the son. As he was eager to reach school in time, he took leave of his mother, rushed out of the house and walked hurriedly till he reached school. He was just in time to play his part which he did with added fervour. His performance won applause from the audience, while the headmaster and all the other teachers felt proud of their pupil.

Vaswani was only eleven years of age when his father died. The father had been confined to bed a few days earlier. On the day he passed away, his condition had shown improvement. But all of a sudden the father's temperature shot up and his illness took a serious turn.

It was the sacred Deepavali day of the year 1890. Sweetmeat stalls, which had been especially decorated, were crowded with customers. Vaswani had just purchased some sweetened nuts, of which he was very fond, when he heard a "voice", which seemed to come as if from nowhere. The "voice" bade him return home immediately as his father was about to breathe his last.

Vaswani threw the nuts and rushed home. When he entered his father's room, he found his elder brother already there. The mother had retired to bed after working the whole day. Vaswani woke her up and the two of them joined the elder brother in keeping vigil by the father's bedside. When the clock struck the hour of eleven, the father cast an affectionate glance at his life-companion and his two elder sons and breathed his last, but not before blessing them all abundantly. To his eldest son he said: "Pahlaj, my son, your name will spread throughout the province of Sind."

"As for you, my child," he said looking at the younger son, "the very winds and waves will bear the fragrance of your name to lands and shores distant and near. For you, my son, will be a saint." He then looked at his wife and uttered a prayer that she be granted strength to bear the heavy blow in a spirit of resignation.

It was indeed tragic that the Vaswani family should have been plunged into mourning on the auspicious Deepavali day, which is a day of reunion and rejoicing in every Hindu home. How inscrutable are the ways of God!

The Young Student

After the departure of the father, the Vaswani family experienced many ups and downs of life, deprived as it was of its mainstay. But the mother consoled herself with the thought that Pahlaj, her eldest son, would soon start supporting the family, after completing his education. As for Vaswani, he was yet eleven years of age, studying in standard IV, equivalent to the present-day standard VIII.

Three long stretching years would have to pass by till the Vaswani family would receive regular monthly income. This period would be one of struggle and self-denial for Varandevi. She, however, felt deeply delighted and elated to see that her children were being promoted from year to year. She would feel especially proud of her second son, who would show brilliant results at school and would also win prizes.

It was during this period that Tekchand Vaswani, Lilaram's cousin and one of the leading lawyers of Hyderabad, sent for young Vaswani and tried to persuade him to take up law as a career.

"I want you to study law and become my partner," Tekchand said to young Vaswani. Vaswani could have made heaps of money as Tekchand's partner, but he could not be tempted by such promising monetary prospects, as he aspired to walk in the footsteps of saints.

In those days, a wave had spread amongst the young men of Hyderabad to scoff at their Hindu religion and to embrace the Christian faith.

Rishi Dayaram, who was the District Judge of Hyderabad and one of the most prominent men of the city, wanted to revive the faith of Sindhi youths in the Hindu religion,—the religion of their forefathers. With this in view, he invited Dr. Annie Besant to speak to the educated youths and inspire them with love for their own faith.

Dr. Annie Besant, an Irish lady, had adopted India as her home and had endeared herself to Indians. Like Madam Blavatsky, whose disciple she was, she was deeply penetrated with the teachings of the rishis of ancient India. She had studied the Hindu religious scriptures and felt drawn towards the Hindu faith at a time, when the Hindu youths were feeling ashamed of the faith of their forefathers.

Dr. Annie Besant travelled all over India, preaching in her matchless style to the Hindus, extolling Indian ideals. Her words had fire in them. She brought back to the Hindu fold many a prodigal youth.

Vaswani's uncle, Tekchand, presided at one meeting which Dr. Annie Besant addressed at Hyderabad. Tekchand, too, could speak with wonderful fluency. Vaswaniji remembered him and often spoke about his "rich, metallic voice".

Dr. Annie Besant was a powerful orator and the people of Hyderabad collected in large numbers to listen to her. Young Vaswani was one of the audience. He was deeply impressed and inspired by Dr. Besant's speech. On his way home, he kept wondering if he would ever become such a gifted speaker.

Young Vaswani was fond of taking solitary walks along the bank of Phuleli river. After he had heard the stirring address of Dr. Besant, during one of these walks by the river-side, he wanted to see how well he could speak. He opened his lips in the solitude of the evening, and lo! words came flowing smoothly and spontaneously as the placid waters of the Phuleli. Only then, for the first time, Vaswani discovered his natural gift of eloquence, which impelled him to use it to stir human hearts.

Vaswaniji thought highly of Rishi Dayaram and Dr. Annie Besant to whom he paid wonderful tributes in his speeches and writings. Of Rishi Dayaram he once wrote:

"One of the truly great ones was Rishi Dayaram. The source of true greatness is humility. To be humble is to renounce self. To be humble is to realise we have no good in us but only nothingness. He loved to think of himself as a 'Zero'. 'One act of true humility,' said St. Teresa, whom Rishi Dayaram loved to read and meditate upon, 'is of more worth to God than all the knowledge in the whole world.' Knowledge he had in abundance: he was, perhaps, the richest in knowledge and culture among the sons of modern Sind. But he was richer in humility than in knowledge.

"Of the wealth of the world, he had more than many of the rich men in Sind, but he knew how to spend wealth in the service of the poor and lowly. And he gave in secret, his left hand not knowing what his right hand gave. 'See thou tell no man,' said Jesus to a leper whom he had cleansed. 'See thou tell no man,' said Rishi Dayaram as he gave twelve hundred rupees to an American, who had to leave for America, in obedience to a call to see his old, dying mother in the United States.

"In the memory of Rishi Dayaram, I hear some echoes of the great Sufi songs of Sind. And in the music of his love and loving message, I hear the songs of the Vedic bards and the sages who have inspired the thought and life of beloved Bharat."

In a tribute to Dr. Annie Besant, Vaswaniji said:

"I heard her first when I was a school-boy. The memory has clung to me these many years. My heart swiftly saw the truth of her teaching. She spoke of the hidden meaning of the Hindu Dharma. Never before did a non-Hindu speak so illuminatingly of the Hindu Scriptures.

"She spoke, she strengthened, she inspired. She dreamt of a day when the Hindus would 'justify to the West' the 'deeper nature of Oriental thought.' With an eloquence rarely equalled, never surpassed, she moved from place to place in her adopted motherland, India, holding out a new hope, kindling a new faith, breathing out a new inspiration."

(From "Fruit Gatherings")

When Vaswani reached the matriculation class he came in contact with Upadhyaya Brahmabandhav, a teacher from Bengal. Brahmabandhav, an intellectual Bengali Brahmin, had embraced the Christian faith and had become a Christian sannyasin. He was an ardent nationalist who fought for the establishment of freedom through his writings and speeches.

When Vaswaniji's book entitled: "Witness of the Ancient" was published in 1926, he dedicated it to this Christian sannyasi. The following tribute gives a glimpse of the affection and reverence Vaswaniji continued to hold for him :—

Teacher and Inspirer of my youth,
One of the ablest Interpreters of Hindu culture,
One of the purest patriots History has known.

It was from Brahmabandhav that Vaswani first learnt of the Upanishads, the books of ancient Indian wisdom. They contain the utterances of the rishis and are of universal value. When the teacher read out the first sloka from the Iso-Upanishad, the pupil felt thrilled, even as were thrilled all those who sat centuries ago at the feet of the rishis in their ashramas. The words of the couplet:

"*Isha Vasyam idam sarvam—tena tyaktena bhunjitha, Ma Gridha!*" kept ringing in his ears long after he had heard them.

This inspiring sloka means: "All that is, is a vesture of the Lord. Renounce this 'all' if you would abide in the joy that never ends. Do not covet thy brother's wealth. Give up greed."

Vaswani felt he must read the whole of the Iso-Upanishad in the original as Sanskrit was his second language. He obtained the book and devoured sloka after sloka of the Upanishad and was filled with the spirit of renunciation. Later, he read all other upanishads also. He often meditated upon the words of wisdom uttered by the rishis and in due course became a great exponent of the Ancient Wisdom.

Young Vaswani was in the matriculation class when destiny took him and his brother, Pahlajrai, to Karachi. As the family was in financial difficulties, the eldest son, after passing the pre-degree examination, took up a teacher's post in Karachi, and both the brothers left Hyderabad for Karachi, where young Vaswani joined the N. J. V. High School.

At the N. J. V. High School also, the teachers were greatly impressed by young Vaswani's handsome looks, remarkable intelligence and sterling character. If his previous headmaster, Contractor, was loath to part with such a bright pupil, Pallonjee, the new headmaster, was too glad to have him. Vaswani soon won the affection of Pallonjee and all the teachers of the N. J. V. High School.

Summer gave way to autumn and autumn was followed by winter. One winter night was severely cold and a poor man asked young Vaswani for a blanket. Vaswani's heart was touched and he was about to give away his own blanket, when a teacher, who happened to be close by, told him to give the poor man a rupee instead. "He will surely go and sell the blanket, anyway," remarked the teacher.

The poor man, no doubt, felt very happy to receive a rupee, which was in those days a fortune. But Vaswani spent a sleepless night, not because it was unusually cold, but because he kept thinking of the plight of the poor man, who had no blanket to protect himself from the biting cold.

As a student, Vaswani spent most of his spare time all alone in a quiet corner in his room, praying and meditating or studying his text-books or reading other books. He grew fond of biographies of those who had dedicated themselves to God and of men and women of light and learning.

The rented room where he stayed with his brother, Pahlajrai, was also shared by other working men, who spent much of their time in gossip. Vaswani had, therefore, to keep late hours in order to study in quiet.

Though Vaswani had none of the facilities which his other classmates enjoyed, he topped the list of successful candidates in Sind and won the Macleod Scholarship.

The headmaster felt honoured, while the family felt proud that he had come out with flying colours and was the recipient of prizes and a scholarship.

When Vaswani was asked by the headmaster what books he would like to have as prize, he selected three books of Pratap Chandra Mozumdar: The Spirit of God, Oriental Christ and Aids to Moral Character. Years later, young Vaswani had the privilege of meeting the author himself.

Vaswani was not keen on going to college, as he wished to take up a job after matriculating so that he could support his dear mother. He was smitten with the desire to sit at the feet of saints and sadhus and to drink in their words of wisdom. He yearned to become a fakir and to preach the Word of God to men and women, whose hearts were athirst for *Nama*—the Name of God. He inwardly cherished a desire to dedicate himself solely to the service of God and humanity. He had no intention of becoming a scholar or a man of position.

His mother once asked him what his aim in life was. "I fain would become a fakir. Bless me, mother, that I may spend my life in their holy company," he frankly replied.

Vaswani had hoped that, pious as his mother was, she would be pleased to hear his words. Instead, she was terribly unhappy. With tears welling up in her eyes and in a voice choked with emotion, she said: "My child, how can I bear to see you clad in the clothes of a fakir? You will break my heart if you will give up the world. No, you must not become a fakir, not at least so long as I live."

Nothing could have been further from young Vaswani's inclinations. But obedient as he was, he solemnly promised his mother not to become a fakir during her life-time.

The Macleod Scholarship, which he had received, inspired him to prosecute his studies. There was no college in Hyderabad then. The only college in the whole of Sind was the D. J. Sind College at Karachi. So Vaswani had again to go to Karachi.

It was the year 1896.

From Student to Professor

In June 1896, Vaswani, then seventeen years of age, left Hyderabad for Karachi to enter D. J. Sind College, whose Principal then was Hasketh. Brilliant and of exemplary character, Vaswani soon attracted the attention of both his classmates and professors.

A strange occurrence brought him close to the Principal. The Principal once asked the students of the pre-degree class to write an essay during the English period. After examining the essays turned in by the students, Principal Hasketh sent for Vaswani, because he suspected that the essay he had submitted was plagiarized.

"Young man, you will do well not to copy in future. This composition is not yours," said the Principal.

Vaswani, who never knew what it was to be dishonest, was stunned. After a few moments he mustered enough courage to say: "Sir, I submit in all humility that I have not copied."

But the Principal could never imagine that an Indian student could write such flawless English as Vaswani had done.

"Your style is similar to that of Dr. Annie Besant. You evidently have copied from her writings," the

Principal said emphatically.

A smile flickered on the lips of young Vaswani. In his quiet, unostentatious way, he said: "I request you, Sir, to test me by making me write another essay in your presence."

The Principal considered this a fair proposal and he gave Vaswani a new assignment. This composition was as superb as the previous one. Principal Hasketh was enormously impressed. He admitted his mistake and the next day prophesied in the class that Vaswani's name would outshine that of Dr. Annie Besant. Principal Hasketh's words proved to be true.

Temperamentally, Vaswani was not sociable and did not mix with his classmates. But his heart went out to those students who frittered away the precious time of their life in "forgetfulness".

In order to lead them to the Kingdom of God, he gradually formed a group of young men. He said to them: "Let us set apart sometime everyday to commune with the Mystery that is God."

The idea appealed to some who asked him to lead them from darkness into light. To begin with, a study class was started, with young Vaswani as the leader. Everyday this group gathered and listened to him, as he read out passages from Srimad Bhagavad Gita and Sri Sukhmani Sahib and other holy scriptures, and unfolded the teachings of Sri Krishna and the great Gurus. Vistas, unheard of before, were opened unto them and realms unseen were visited by them. The result was that their outlook on life was changed to a great extent.

But intellectual young men are prone to accept one from amongst them as a leader only after he has been tested and tried. The best way to test a person, they thought, was to expose him to temptation and then observe his behaviour.

These young collegians, therefore, hit upon a plan. Vaswani, their leader, who always moved about with an air of radiant innocence, had never known the charms and wiles of a woman. On the pretext of taking a walk, they decided to take young Vaswani to the house of a prostitute on Napier Road and leave him there with an attractive young damsel.

It was evening when the young collegians set out for their walk with Vaswani. The evening star shone luminous and resplendent and watched with interest the scene which was about to be enacted.

The young men led their leader to a house of ill-fame on Napier Road, which some of them frequented when fired with passion. Innocent as he was, Vaswani entered the room where an attractive prostitute full of youthful charms was seated. The young collegians quietly slipped out, one by one, leaving Vaswani and the prostitute in the room.

The damsel cast her seductive looks at the handsome young man with a fine physique. His complexion was fair and he had curly hair. But the far-away look in his eyes was something which surprised her. She was used to receiving visits from young men eager to appease their sexual lust. But here was a youth, who was so withdrawn and absorbed in solitude that he appeared to be in a dream-world. It was a strange spectacle.

She gazed at the visitor through her semi-closed eye-lids. He still seemed to be lost in a world of his own. Her presence meant nothing to him, for he did not even cast a glance at her. She felt she must draw him out and drag him into her world of physical sensual love. He surely would shake off his reticence if she made the initial advances, she thought.

She went close to him and whispered softly in his ear: "Let us repair into the inner chamber."

These words seemed to wake him from his reverie, for young Vaswani smiled and said: "Yes, sister, sooner or later we needs must repair to the innermost chamber of the Interior Castle."

Such language was unknown to her, who was familiar only with foolish prattle and passionate outbursts from young men as they clung to her.

The visitor, she thought, would surely recollect why he had come if she displayed her feminine form.

So, lifting her garment, she bared a portion of her body. Vaswani failed to succumb to her beauty and charms. He still remained aloof, walled in by impenetrable walls, as it were. But she would not let him go until he had fallen a victim to her wiles, until his heart throbbed at the glance of her eyes and at the touch of her hands. She seemed to be bent upon winning a victory.

"Behold, young man! Open your eyes and feast on my beauty," she said as she moved closer to him. Vaswani was unmoved. He calmly told the prostitute: "Sister! Physical beauty blooms for a while only to fade away, while the body, too, perishes one day. Forget the body, but forget not the soul and pray for inner beauty. Then may your life be truly and richly blessed."

All that the young man said was Greek to her. Nevertheless, when he urged her: "Let us both sing together," she understood him. There was such sincerity in his words that, as soon as he opened his mouth to sing, she joined him.

Half an hour went by. The young collegians felt it was time to check how their leader had fared in the presence of the fair prostitute. They were mighty surprised to see the two singing the Name Divine, one absorbed in doing so, the other fully conscious of what she was doing.

They then realised that Vaswani was no ordinary youth to be measured by their standards and to be weighed in the scales of their worldly experience. He was far, far above others. He was like the mighty Olympus while they were mere pigmies. He was as unsullied as the evening star that had been a silent witness to the triumph of spirit over matter. He was pure as the placid waters of the Mansarovar which lies on the lofty Himalayan heights.

With their hearts filled with feelings of guilt and remorse, they went back with their heads bent in shame. But Vaswani spoke to them not a word of reproach. They, however, felt that his very silence was enough condemnation.

This reminds one of an incident in the life of Sri Ramakrishna, the Saint of Dakshineshwar. Two prostitutes had paid him a visit in the temple. It is said Sri Ramakrishna looked at them as if they were manifestations of the Divine Mother. He saluted them and soon went into samadhi.

After this experience, these young men developed an implicit faith in Vaswani. They rarely missed the study class which he conducted and tried to follow the words of wisdom which he passed on to them. Vaswani asked his comrades to build their lives on the rock of prayer. "Prayer is the voice of faith," he said. "By building your lives on the rock of prayer will your lives be enriched in faith."

True prayer is an attempt to commune with the Beloved. It is the cry of longing and the voice of faith. How strange that people grow tired of praying when prayer fills the troubled heart with peace! How strange that people pray only when their hearts are in trouble! Much of our prayer is begging God to fulfil our wants.

Young Vaswani asked his comrades to lift their hearts in prayer to God everyday and not only in moments of difficulty and distress. He himself related an interesting anecdote in this connection.

"I was a school-age child when I was placed in a precarious situation. A primary school teacher, under whom I studied, always called me to his house to massage his legs, while he enjoyed his afternoon siesta.

"One hot sultry noon, I left home to reach his house. The street was deserted. A Pathan, seeing me all alone, tried to kidnap me. He loosened his *salwar* (wide trousers) and imprisoned me inside.

"I was afraid the Pathan would sell me. In my moment of distress and agony I remembered God, lifted my heart in prayer to Him and sought His help.

"You will be surprised to learn that God listened to my prayer and responded to it immediately. An elderly person soon appeared in the street unexpectedly.

The Pathan tried to give him the slip. But his manner and movement betrayed him. The elderly person was experienced enough to note the movement of my legs and hands in the *salwar*. He raised a hue and cry. Men rushed out of their homes. The Pathan got so alarmed that he threw me and fled. Ever since, my faith in the power of prayer has become firm. And now I have made prayer the shield of my life!"

In those days, the Intermediate Arts and Final B. A. examinations were held in Bombay as the college was affiliated to the University of Bombay. Students from Sind had to go to Bombay to appear for these examinations. They, therefore, utilised the opportunity to visit neighbouring places like Poona and Nasik, Matheran and Mahableshwar, whenever they went to Bombay. Students often travelled from Karachi to Bombay aboard the ship.

The journey from Karachi to Bombay took four days. Students, who could not afford to travel by first or second class, travelled as deck passengers. They stayed on board the ship for these four days in the midst of clamour, confusion, and shouts of the crew. Nonetheless they enjoyed their voyage for they could gaze freely at the azure skies above and the blue waters below, as the boat made its way through the waters of the pathless sea.

Vaswani's heart was stirred by strange impulses even as he looked at the waves rising from the breast of the sea and again losing themselves in its immensity. He felt he, too, was a wave that emerged from infinity and would one day return to infinity, as the ultimate voyage would be towards the Eternal Home. Then why should he waste his time in studying text-books which did not teach him how to tread the Path? Why should he not dedicate his life to the Almighty? Thoughts, such as these, passed through his mind in the mystic silence of the evening, in the moonlit midnight and at the early hour of the rose-hued dawn.

But one familiar face would unfailingly appear before his mind's eye and that was of his mother, who went through all kinds of ordeals in order that he might get college education.

He longed for the Divine Mother, but was being held back by his earthly mother. Love for God pulled him one way, while attachment to his mother led him the other way. But a time would certainly come when he would not merely utter the words "My God and my all!" which St. Francis of Assisi had uttered over eight hundred years ago, but would, like him, give up everything for His sake.

His classmates observed that during the voyage Vaswani at times seemed to escape into the innermost recesses of his soul, away from all their fun and frolic. They also observed that, when most of them were fast asleep, Vaswani was awake and absorbed in thoughts of his own.

Vaswani made it a point to ask his college-mates to gather together on the deck more than once everyday to sing God's praises and to offer the homage of their hearts to Him.

Vaswani always cherished in his heart a secret desire to meet men and women of light and leading. He had great respect for Lokamanya Tilak, who gave to the Nation the mantra: "Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it." When he went to Bombay for the pre-degree examination he paid a visit to Poona to meet this great soul. He felt disappointed when he learnt that Tilak was in the Yervada prison. As he was but a youth, he was not permitted to see this great hero, whom he worshipped in the shrine of his heart. Of Tilak, he wrote later: "In the day India attains to Swarajya, a united people must make a pilgrimage to Lokamanya's Samadhi and invoke the blessing of his heroic spirit upon a free nation."

Vaswani returned to Hyderabad to spend his vacations at home. No doubt, his mother felt happy to have him. Pahlajrai felt equally happy. Even Vaswani had looked forward to the joy of meeting them. Vaswani had great reverence for his mother, but the two brothers were linked together in a bond of love as they had much in common. Both were devoted to God and Truth. Both had reverence for the prophets and saints of the East and the West. Both were eager to serve the needy and distressed. Both had simple tastes and were alike in temperament.

If Vaswani was well-versed in Sanskrit, Pahlajrai was a scholar in Persian. Rumi and Hafiz, the mystics of Iran, were his favourites. He would often be seen reading their books, studying their thoughts and meditating upon their mystic sayings. If Vaswani was handsome to look at, the saying: "Handsome is that handsome does," could very well be applied to Pahlajrai. Vaswani was, however, reserved by temperament, while his brother was sociable by nature. Vaswani loved solitude, while Pahlajrai, despite his longing for silence, was an active social worker and reformer. Pahlajrai got married, whereas Vaswani decided to remain a *balabrahmacharin* (bachelor).

Vaswani had a sister, Papurdevi, and two more brothers, Awat and Manghan, who were younger to him. Awat passed away when he was a child. Vaswani retained fond memories of this younger brother. Papur and Manghan loved their two elder brothers and affectionately called them "dada". They, too, felt delighted whenever their younger dada came home to spend vacations with them.

Vaswani had the habit of going out alone for long walks every evening to solitary spots. He went all the way from Vaswani Lane to Hirabad, which was known for the tombs of Mirs, who were once the rulers of Hyderabad. He often went to the banks of Phuleli river. Hyderabad was known for gardens owned by the Mukhis who belonged to the rich Bhaiband class. Das garden was a very famous garden named after the patriot, C. R. Das. It was about three miles away from Vaswani's house. Vaswani occasionally visited these gardens also.

Vaswani, shy by nature, gradually gained in popularity in college. He was regarded as an ideal student. He was exceptionally brilliant and showed remarkable results at the examinations. He was a fluent speaker and took an active part in lectures and debates. He became the editor of the college magazine for which he wrote many articles under pseudonyms. His writings were characterised by depth, which is usually lacking in articles written by collegians. He wrote prose and poetry equally well. He was a keen student of Literature and Logic, History and Economics, Philosophy and Politics. The four years Vaswani spent at college were thus eventful.

In the year 1900, Vaswani paid a second visit to Bombay in the company of his classmates to appear for the B. A. examination This time, too, he went as a deck passenger.

Once again on board the ship, he felt the urge to give up his scholastic life and dedicate himself solely to God. The vast immensity of the sea around him and of the starlit skies overhead inspired him with such lofty, noble and sublime thoughts. But once again his mother's face kept haunting him. She had denied herself the necessities of life and incurred debts in order that he may receive the best education and secure a good job.

Once again would his spirit leave the cage of the body and fly on wings along with the wind that blew so freely, in an effort to reach unknown regions of the spirit. But his friends and his books, which too were his never-failing companions, drew him back to the world of seeming reality.

Vaswani went back to Hyderabad after appearing for the B. A. examination.

The summer of 1900, with its scorching heat, glided by slowly and tardily as eager students awaited the dawn of the day, when the B. A. results were to be announced. The hearts of candidates are usually filled with doubt and fear on that day, and Vaswani was no exception.

On the appointed day Vaswani heard a knock on the door. He figured that the postman had brought the telegram for him. He opened the door and took the telegram with his heart aflutter. With trembling hands he opened it. It had been sent by Roopchand Bilaram, who later rose to be the Judicial Commissioner in Sind. He was senior to Vaswani by two years. He was in Bombay then and had been delighted to learn that Vaswani had topped the list of successful students in English. He had won the Ellis Scholarship. Roopchand hastened to send his college-mate his hearty congratulations on the brilliant success.

Vaswani felt grateful to God for having enabled him to win laurels. His brilliant success, he was sure, was mainly due to God's Grace and his mother's blessings. He went to his mother to apprise her of his good luck.

"My son!" the proud mother said, "how I have waited for this moment!" Her eyes were moist with tears and her hand trembled as she placed it on his head in blessing.

"Mother!" confided the son, "I, too, have looked for this moment for a long time." He then muttered these words more to himself than to his mother: "I have secured the Ellis Scholarship. But when will I achieve freedom?"

"Freedom to do what?" inquired the mother.

"To renounce the world, to become a fakir and to dedicate my life to God!" replied the son.

The ground from under Varandevi's feet seemed to slip. Was it for this moment that she had waited? She placed her hands on her ears and burst out saying: "Do you realise the consequences if you leave us and become a fakir? You will reduce us all to the state of beggars, of fakirs!"

Varandevi could speak no more, she felt so hurt. Instead, she burst into sobs. Vaswani's tender heart could not bear to see his mother's agony. To assuage her grief, he said: "Mother! I will do as you tell me. I am your most obedient son, servant and slave."

"Then give up all your foolish ideas and start earning money in right earnest," declared Varandevi.

"Son, I have heavy debts to repay. You little know what your education has cost me."

Vaswani bowed to his mother and resigned himself to the Will Divine. He then sought the blessings of his elder brother, who felt happy beyond measure because of the honour his dear brother had gained.

Though he had secured the Ellis Scholarship, Vaswani did not even know what it was to be an Ellis Scholar ! He had to refer to the University Calendar. After two days he received a letter from the Principal of the college congratulating him on the award. This was the first time that a Karachi College student had won this honour. Vaswani was given books as a prize along with one hundred rupees in cash.

After graduation, Vaswani became a Dakshina Fellow and received a monthly honorarium. The Fellows taught in the college for a few hours every week and simultaneously studied for the Master's degree. Vaswani lectured as a scholar and as one who had mastered his subjects. Students found his periods so interesting that they listened to him attentively. They were drawn to him spontaneously and held him in high esteem. Thus with the beginning of the twentieth century began the ministry of Vaswani.

Vaswani continued to conduct the Gita and the Sukhmani classes which were attended by many men. He preached that mere intellect was not enough. He emphasized the value of character and humility. He repeatedly reminded the students not to forget the divine realities of life. He explained to them that the traditions of India, which are essentially of spiritual nature, are reflected in the Gita and the Upanishads. He taught more by example than by precept. Because of the purity of his life, students were drawn to him in increasing numbers.

Vaswani was frequently invited to address prayer meetings at the Brahmo Samaj at Karachi. He was then in his early twenties.

After two years of intensive study and activity, Vaswani received the Master of Arts degree in 1902.

His mother wanted him to take up the legal profession like his uncle, Tekchand. "Your uncle makes heaps of money. Son, I want you to earn money if only for my sake," she pleaded. But Vaswani would not be tempted. He abhorred the legal profession. Not for him the lawyer's jugglery which would make him deviate from the path of truth. Nevertheless, he promised his mother to earn money just to please her.

Soon after obtaining the Master of Arts degree, Vaswani served as an honorary teacher in his *alma mater*, the Union Academy. But destiny had in store for him worldly wealth and honours, position and prominence as well as riches of the spirit and sainthood. So it soon altered the course of his life.

In Indian families it has been a custom to have arranged marriages and parents of girls approach those of eligible boys. Quite a number of well-to-do parents of pretty-looking girls of the Amil community approached Varandevi. She sincerely felt that it was her duty to get her son married as he had come of age. She wanted to do so to be relieved of her "responsibility". Not a day passed without her pressing the point of marriage with her son.

Vaswani had decided not to be fettered by wedlock. He wished to remain a *balabrahmachari*. The literal meaning of the word *brahmachari* is "one who walks the way of God." Yes, Vaswani aspired to walk with God, to talk to God and to become a servant of God. He made it clear to his mother that he had absolutely no intention to marry.

The mother was unconvinced. She was sure that her efforts would be crowned with success if she persevered. Gentle, loving and obedient as Vaswani was, he would surely one day give in and agree to be bound in wedlock, the mother thought.

Vaswani found his mother's entreaties embarassing, and inspite of the reverence he had for her, he desired to be far far away from her. Away from her, he would be spared this ordeal and would be free to direct his mind, heart and soul to God.

He had hardly worked as a school teacher for a few months, when he received an offer of a Professorship of History and Philosophy from the Principal of the Metropolitan College, Calcutta, later named the Vidyasagar College after Vidyasagar, the great humanitarian, educationist, philosopher and philanthropist of Bengal.

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was the Principal of the Sanskrit College, Calcutta. He was a man of wealth and gave away large amounts in charity to widows and orphans, needy students and poor people. He was a great scholar well-versed in Sanskrit grammar and literature. He was, therefore, given the title of "Vidyasagar", which means "Ocean of learning."

When Vaswani received the job offer from the Metropolitan College, he felt exceedingly happy, as it would take him away from Hyderabad. He conveyed the glad tidings to his mother and other members of the family. The idea of Vaswani's becoming a professor greatly appealed to Varandevi, but she objected to his going to Calcutta as it was two thousand miles away from Hyderabad. How could she send her young son far away from her?

But God fulfils Himself in many ways. Pahlajrai, whose word the mother always respected, persuaded her to allow him to go to Calcutta. Vaswani, therefore, left his native town, Hyderabad, and went to the noisy, overcrowded city of Calcutta. The time had come for the sun of his life to rise in greater glory and splendour.

The Grace of the Guru

In 1902, Vaswani went to Bengal and joined the Metropolitan College, Calcutta, as a Professor of History and Philosophy. He stayed as a paying guest in Srirampur. Every morning he would go to Calcutta by a local train. The Ex-Dakshina Fellow, who had attracted several Sindhi young men towards himself, now started exercising great influence on the minds of the Bengali youth. A magnetic influence seemed to flow from him. Whoever came in contact with him was affected by this invisible emanation. Whoever listened to him could not help but fall under his magic spell.

The Brahmo Samaj of Calcutta requested him, time and again, to address their gatherings.

The fame of young Professor Vaswani, still in twenties, spread all through Calcutta. If his speeches at the Brahmo Samaj appealed to men and women, his lectures at the Metropolitan College thrilled the hearts of the young men of Calcutta.

As he harboured ill-will against none and cherished love for all, organisations with diverse idealogies sought him.

To people, who addressed him as Prof. Vaswani, he would often say: "Call me not a professor. I have come here in the spirit of a pilgrim, a *yatri*. I am a seeker."

Well may the learned professor call himself a pilgrim, a *yatri*, a seeker. For inspite of his work, he was in quest of a spot blessed by the living presence of a rishi, a seer of the spiritual realm, a creative and radiant personality. He aspired to sit at the feet of a holy one, who would unveil to him the face of truth

He earned a handsome salary as a professor Most of it he sent to his mother, at whose feet he had promised to place bags of gold. Varandevi felt both relieved and happy for she had loans to repay.

At the end of the academic year, Prof. Vaswani went to Hyderabad to spend the vacation with the family. They were overjoyed to have him in their midst.

According to the Hindu philosophy of life, the purpose of human life is to realise the Self. Human life is likened to a pilgrimage on earth. It is not meant for pleasures and enjoyment nor for the gratification of the senses. "The goal of human life," as Dr. Radhakrishnan has said: "is the realisation of the Supreme Ideal," which is *moksha* or liberation or release from *samsara* (cycle of birth and death).

In order to reach the goal, in general one has to regulate one's life in keeping with certain disciplines known as ashramas. The word ashrama is derived from the Sanskrit root *shrama*, which means " to discipline oneself." It is in ashramas that the individual disciplines himself and gradually evolves to the higher life by exercising self-control, self-discipline and self-denial.

The ashramas are as under:

1. Brahmacharya: that of a student, leading a life of celibacy.
2. Grihastha: that of a married man, a householder.
3. Vanaprashtha : that of retired contemplative life.
4. Sanyasa: that of the life of complete renunciation.

Hindu parents accordingly regard it as their religious duty to see that their children get married when they come of age. It not only helps young couples to lead a healthy, useful life but also enables the parents to enter the third stage of *vanaprastha* as they feel relieved of the burdens of domestic life.

Young Vaswani had passed through the first stage, i.e. the ashrama of *brahmacharya*. He had lived an unsullied, pure and chaste life of the student. It was high time, his mother thought, that he entered the second stage of life, that of *grihastha*.

Varandevi was very anxious to see him settled down in life. Her eldest son had married before he had turned twenty. It was now the turn of the second son who was now twenty-two years old. She was receiving good offers from the parents of beautiful girls belonging to respectable families. But whenever she broached the question of marriage, Prof. Vaswani frankly told her that he aspired to become a fakir and hence would not marry.

Most of Vaswani's students even were married, while he was still a bachelor. Prof. Vaswani was determined to live a celibate life; his mother was equally determined to establish him firmly in the bonds of matrimony. She requested an elderly neighbour, Baharmal, to talk her son into marriage.

Baharmal was confident that he would ultimately bring Prof. Vaswani round. He was a man of experience and had once occupied a prominent post in the State of Bahawalpur. Prof. Vaswani, however, proved to be more than a match for Baharmal. He was determined not to entangle himself in matrimony and no earthly power would lure him into this temptation.

Once when Prof. Vaswani was at home, Baharmal paid a visit. Vaswani at once rose and greeted him with reverence and humility, as was his wont.

Baharmal deftly opened the subject of marriage.

"Do you know, young man, that your house is on fire?" he inquired. He seemed to be excited as he spoke these words.

"Our house on fire!" Prof. Vaswani exclaimed.

"How so?" he asked.

"Our whole community is scandalised at your behaviour. The famous Vaswani family, with its fair name and good reputation, has fallen into disfavour because of you," the retired official of Bahawalpur said.

Now Prof. Vaswani understood the purpose of Baharmal's visit. This was all at his mother's bidding. Because of the prevalent social customs she did not want him to remain a bachelor. He would have to fight for the right to dedicate his life exclusively to God.

"Sir, it is exceedingly kind of you to take so much interest in one, who is not at all interested in others and who spends his time in quiet. I do all I can to keep my mother happy. I send her most of my salary. What more would you have me do?" Prof. Vaswani asked in all humility.

The visitor thought that Prof. Vaswani's resolve had weakened and that he was inclined to listen to him. He said to him: "Let me tell you openly that it is high time you married. In fact, you should have married long ago."

Prof. Vaswani felt that the moment had come when he could get the long-sought-after freedom. It was not by reasoning nor by arguing that he would achieve victory, he thought. He would win freedom by behaving only as an abnormal being. He looked at the visitor and gently remarked: "Kind Sir, won't you tell me what Reality is?" He repeated this question over and over again in a strange tone.

Baharmal was simply dazed.

"Has your son become eccentric?" he inquired from Varandevi. " There is evidently something wrong with him. He does not seem to be in his proper senses."

Once again Prof. Vaswani repeated this question: "Noble Sir, won't you tell me what Reality is?"

By this time Baharmal was certain that Prof. Vaswani was not normal. He felt that the sooner he left the place the better it would be for him. It was futile to spend time with an eccentric person. He wished Varandevi goodbye and left.

Prof. Vaswani drew a sigh of relief and immediately repaired to his room upstairs. He bolted the room from inside and shed tears. They were tears of relief; they were tears of longing. He prayed to God to fulfil the longing in his heart and to grant him strength to remain true to his resolve.

Prof. Vaswani did not come down from his room that day. Varandevi felt anxious as he had not even come down for his food. She sent her daughter, Papur, to induce him to eat food. At last when Prof. Vaswani came down he ate his meal in silence; he did not speak a single word.

That very evening he once again saw a match-maker speaking to his mother in a hushed voice. Those were days of arranged marriages when match-makers visited the houses of eligible girls and boys and spoke to their parents about bringing about alliances.

All talk of marriage was nauseating to Prof. Vaswani. He looked forward to the day when the vacation would be over, and college would reopen. He lived in daily dread, for he was afraid his mother would once again press her point. At last the day arrived for Prof. Vaswani to leave for Calcutta.

At Calcutta, he attended to his teaching work as usual. But this time he was determined to find a spot where an atmosphere of prayer and peace prevailed—a spot sanctified by the living presence of a holy being. It is in the presence of such a one that one feels the presence of God. The breath of heaven is about such a being and at his feet one can surely find peace.

Prof. Vaswani had heard of three holy men of Bengal. One of them was Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the Saint of Dakshineshwar. The second was Sri Keshub Chandra Sen, the founder of Navavidhan Brahmo Samaj. The third was Vivekananda, who gave to modern India the message: "Awake! Arise! And stop not till the Goal is reached!" and who dedicated his life to the spreading of the message of his master, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. But all the three had departed from this world. And Prof. Vaswani did not know how to begin his search and whither to go in quest.

Nevertheless, the desire for the quest so obsessed him that it filled his heart with deep unrest. This longing led him to the Dakshineshwar Temple, sanctified by the presence of Sri Ramakrishna. He was greatly pleased to see the spacious garden attached to the Temple. He considered himself blessed when he entered the Saint's room and saw the simple articles the Saint had used in his life-time. To Prof. Vaswani, the very dust of the room was sacred. What appealed to him most was the simple earthen lamp which was kept burning all the twenty-four hours of the day and night. His eyes were touched with tears when he beheld the picture of Jesus Christ at which the Saint had gazed for years together. Jesus Christ had influenced Prof. Vaswani's life also.

The province of Bengal has been blessed by souls rich in the spirit of renunciation and devotion. It is in this province that Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who proclaimed no dogma but sang: "Hari bol, Hari bol, Hari bol bhai," was born. Through this simple mantra he transformed the lives of countless Indians.

In Calcutta, in the days Prof. Vaswani lived there, processions of the young and old marched through the city, singing the mantra of the Mahaprabhu: "Hari bol, Hari bol, Hari bol bhai!" People in thousands joined these processions and participated in devotional singing.

Prof. Vaswani, too, joined these processions. His eyes would be moistened with tears and his heart would throb with ecstasy on such occasions. Sometimes he would even fall to the ground and lose his consciousness; so full was his heart with fervour and devotion!

In his quest, Prof. Vaswani visited one place after another. His search was at last rewarded when he entered a small house located at 9, Chidamodi Lane. A flight of steps led to it. Prof. Vaswani saw a few people seated together. Most of them appeared to be educated young men. All were absorbed in chanting the Name Divine: Hari bol! Hari bol! Hari bol! Hari bol!

In the midst of this group sat one who drew Prof. Vaswani's attention. Promotholal Sen was his name. He was the leader of this small band of aspiring young men. He was a nephew of Sri Keshub Chandra Sen. He had been educated at the Manchester College and had acquired the degree of Master of Arts. He was also well-versed in the Sanskrit lore.

Prof. Vaswani had heard of Sri Keshub Chandra Sen, whom he considered to be one of the three great men of Bengal, nay of India, of the nineteenth century. He had not heard of his nephew, Sri Promotholal Sen. But at the very first glance it seemed to Prof. Vaswani that he had been acquainted with him in many a bygone birth.

Promotholal looked into the searching eyes of Prof. Vaswani. Prof. Vaswani looked back and was captivated and conquered. To Prof. Vaswani it seemed that Promotholal's face shone like molten gold. Prof. Vaswani gazed at his mystic face. This holy man in turn fixed his strange hypnotic eyes on Prof. Vaswani. Prof. Vaswani forgot his surroundings, even his body. Under the gaze of those wonderful eyes he sat as if spell-bound.

Prof. Vaswani continued to sit breathless and awe-struck. His heart was filled with peace profound. He had at last beheld one who sat far from madding crowds and whose very silence was eloquent. But a voice whispered to him that he must know him first and then accept him as his gurudev. Intellectual as Prof. Vaswani was, he would not be misled by his first impulse.

The mystic attraction for Promotholal Sen brought Prof. Vaswani day after day to Promotholal's house. As days passed by, he came to know more of this group, the members of which spent their time in devotional singing. His heart fluttered within him like a bird whenever he joined in the Nam-Kirtan.

The time soon came when Prof. Vaswani recognised his Lord and Master, and a sweet fountain welled up from his heart—the fountain of faith. He, who was affectionately called Naluda, which means Nalu dada, became Prof. Vaswani's gurudev, his spiritual preceptor. Henceforth it would be for Naluda to give and for Prof. Vaswani to receive.

Prof. Vaswani's search was thus over. He had found one who would satisfy his deep hunger for God. He had discovered one who had the humility of a scholar and the simplicity of single-mindedness. He had come across one who possessed the selflessness of a man of renunciation. It was for such a one that he had longed. Like the great scientist, Archimedes, he felt like repeating the word "Eureka" over and over again.

About his gurudev, Prof. Vaswani once wrote thus in glowing terms: "To know him was to love him. His presence was like a surging star ! His life,– gentle, true, moving amongst men yet communing with God,– was like the lamp glowing with light. Broken is the lamp, the light shines on !

"It was not my privilege to see Sri Keshub Chandra Sen. But God in His mercy granted me the privilege to see Sri Keshub Chandra Sen's great nephew and devoted disciple, Sadhu Promotholal Sen."

One day Naluda, his gurudev, greeted Prof. Vaswani with a smile and affectionately said to him: "Let me give you a name." Prof. Vaswani rejoiced, for the grace of the gurudev was being conferred upon him.

Naluda smiled once again and said to Prof. Vaswani: "I will henceforth call you 'Boka'." Prof. Vaswani asked what the word meant. Naluda replied: "The word means ignoramus." The disciple felt exceedingly happy. Ever since, the bond of friendship between the master and the disciple ripened rapidly and the two drew closer to each other.

Is it not strange that Prof. Vaswani, whom his students admired, loved and revered as their learned and enlightened Professor, should rejoice in being addressed as ignoramus? Well may Prof. Vaswani rejoice, for he considered it a mark of grace. And none progressed on the Path, unless he first considered himself ignorant. For on the Path the knowledge one derives from books is of little avail; the praises the world showers on one are but naught; in fact, they become a great hindrance.

Sri Promotholal Sen was a man of personal magnetism, for from him emanated holy vibrations which influenced those around him. To sit in his presence was to sit in the Temple Invisible. He spoke few words. And when Prof. Vaswani listened to him, he seemed to be transported to lands, distant and unknown. His speeches were brief and beautiful. They were like sweet songs that stirred human hearts even as the strains from the lyre of Orpheus quickened the spirit in man and beast.

The teeming city of Calcutta hummed with life and with tumult and noise. But Prof. Vaswani would go and sit in the presence of this Bengali saint who shunned noise and sensation. Listening to him, Prof. Vaswani would feel enchanted. Even during his daily work, the voice of him, who was 'simple and humble and rich in love and radiant in God-consciousness', remained close to his heart.

Prof. Vaswani would finish his college duties and spend most of his spare time in the company of Naluda, his gurudev, who in turn loved him and took a keen interest in him.

Prof. Vaswani knew he would not feel at ease in his home in Hyderabad because of his mother's ceaseless talk of marriage and because he had at last got what he had aspired to all along. He decided not to go home when college closed for next vacation. When he did not return to Hyderabad, his mother grew anxious.

Varandevi asked Papur to write Prof. Vaswani a letter of entreaty, appealing to him in all earnestness to come home and be with them for the vacation. But home had ceased to be a home for Prof. Vaswani. He wrote back saying that he had not the heart to leave Calcutta. In the noisy crowded city of Calcutta he enjoyed rare peace of mind, while in the peace-breathing atmosphere of Hyderabad he would be deprived of the same, as his mother would nag him once again to put on the fetters of marriage. He was wedded to God, he wrote to his sister, and longed to dedicate himself solely to Him. To avoid friction, he had chosen to stay away from Hyderabad.

The letter gave a rude shock to Varandevi. She felt that the castles she had built in the air about him were crumbling and crashing. Matters had now reached such a state that she had to decide whether she should lose her son or give up the dreams she had woven around him. She finally decide not to be denied the sight of her son. She promised him that she would not broach the subject of marriage any more and persuaded him to visit Hyderabad.

The talk of marriage was dropped; but another fear haunted Varandevi. It was that of her son bcoming a fakir. How could she bear to see her handsome son, who resembled a Greek God, clad in the garb of a mendicant? When the mother reminded him of his solemn promise, he once again assured her that he would abide by it during her life-time. She little realised that beneath the garb of a wordly man beat a heart upon which pressed the foot-steps of God, within which he heard the Call and was silently and secretly preparing to respond to it.

Even though Vaswani spurned the idea of marriage, it is not easy for an eligible young man to stay single. He continued to receive many matrimonial proposals. Nearly twenty years later, when he was running the Rajpur Ashrama, the daughter of a minister sent him a proposal for marriage.

Vaswani was in Rajpur when a missile was placed in his hands. The bearer, who had definite instructions to bring a reply, stayed on. Vaswani's hands trembled when he read the contents. The daughter of a minister of noble heritage had been so greatly enthralled by his eloquence that she had resolved to marry him.

The minister's daughter worked as the Principal of a girls' school. "I long to be married to you," she wrote candidly. "It has come to my knowledge that you are in Rajpur at present and so I would like to meet you."

The *balabrahmachari*, who had renounced his all for the sake of God, had received an offer of betrothal from the daughter of a minister. What a freak of fate!

This message was followed by yet another. The matter had grown all the more serious, for this time the fair writer had enclosed her photograph. Vaswani prayed fervently that he be saved from the snares of the world.

In Hyderabad, Prof. Vaswani's thoughts turned constantly to his gurudev, Naluda, and to God. He, whose heart experienced intense yearning, would later bid others to have the same yearning for God. He would in this connection relate an interesting ancedote from his life. Like Sri Ramakrishna, he, too, taught his disciples through parables and practical incidents.

Vaswani had a Punjabi cook named Bhajan. Vaswani often beheld a far-off gaze in the cook's eyes which were at times touched with tears. He inquired of Bhajan the cause for his tears and the far-away gaze.

"Sire!" replied the cook, "I stay here in Hyderabad-Sind, but my heart flies every now and then to Punjab, where dwell my near and dear ones. I attend to my daily work, but my thoughts dwell constantly upon my homeland and the members of the family."

"Do thou likewise," Vaswani used to say. "Like the cook let your body be here in this world, but forget not your real Home, your Eternal Home, which is not here but in the Land Beyond. Let your thoughts dwell constantly upon the Lotus-Feet of the Lord, and with tear-touched eyes remember Him, who is the Source whence we have come and where we mus return sooner or later. The modern man lives in forgetfulness. But forget ye not that God is the Home-Land of the soul."

Prof. Vaswani was happy beyond measure to be back in Calcutta when the vacation was over, as this afforded him an opportunity to be in the presence of his gurudev, after a long absence. He repeated his visits to his spiritual preceptor with renewed enthusiasm and greater yearning than before.

Prof. Vaswani used to sit in silence everyday for sometime. His thoughts did not wander as happens with most of the people who sit to meditate. Prof. Vaswani was a lover of silence. His spirit was uplifted and exalted during these moments of silence. From these heights he beheld the Kingdom of the Spirit. He sought to enter it. His spirit also touched the depths during these periods of silence.

It was in such moments of silence that he put to himself the question which comes to all seekers after Truth. He asked the simple yet profound query: "Who am I?" "Surely, I am not the body," he said to himself over and over again. "Most surely I am something else."

Entering into silence is even as entering a vast and dense forest. It is easy to enter this forest but very difficult to wend one's way through it to the Goal. But Prof. Vaswani seemed to be familiar with this mazelike forest. The deeper he went in, the greater treasures did he come across. There are forests which have trees of oak and sandal-wood, and beyond there are mines of copper, silver, gold and diamonds. The forest within abounds in riches of the Spirit. Rightly writes Vaswani: "Settle yourself in silence and you will greet the God within you. Be still in the soul within you and you will know." Did not Jesus Christ also say: "The Kingdom of God is within you."

Prof. Vaswani in his moments of silence discovered that he had been born and reborn over and over again. Man is a wanderer, he realised, born to die, a wanderer who had shed oceans of tears.

Veil after veil was withdrawn as he dived deeper in this unknown forest. He perceived that he was a pilgrim, whose wanderings had now ceased, for he was at the sacred feet of his spiritual preceptor.

He went still deeper into the forest and discovered that he was an aspirant, a seeker after Wisdom of the Spirit. He also realised that he was a bird that belonged to a realm different from this mortal world. Man is a winged creature not shorn of pinions but with folded, feathered wings. He has but to open out his wings through spiritual disciplines that he may fly towards his true Homeland, the Kingdom of the Spirit.

The question then arose in Prof. Vaswani's mind as to how he may unfold his wings and spread them to be able to fly. He carried this question to Naluda who, Prof. Vaswani felt, would certainly show him the way.

Naluda listened to the tale of Prof. Vaswani's quest, of his entry into the forest within, and his findings therein. To his query he said: "Not all the lore contained in books and scrolls would succeed in unfolding these wings. Learning and commonsense avail little. What is needed is something greater than commonsense. It is greater even than sects and creeds."

Prof. Vaswani pondered over these weighty words. Man is indeed foolish, he thought, to argue, quarrel and fight in the name of religion. The story of religion appeared to him in its true colours. He realised how tragic it was. No wonder, true devotees of God have always risen above dogmas and creeds, which only serve to imprison men. True devotees have worshipped the One God who has been called by diverse names. Ishwar, Allah, Jehovah, Ahura Mazda and Abba are but different names of the same Radiant One.

Prof. Vaswani's problem now was how to attain to the Radiant One. Naluda would certainly have a solution for his problem, he thought. He traced his steps to his ashrama and placed his problem before him.

The Master looked at the disciple with a penetrating gaze and said: "Let your heart be filled with longing, with yearning, with love. Spread out wings of longing and soar in the immensity of the Kingdom of Light. Let your heart yearn for Knowledge, for Wisdom, for Illumination."

These words went home. Prof. Vaswani recalled the words of the Sindhi poet, Beydil, who sang the song of gratitude for being granted the gift of Love. A loving heart is a yearning heart, thought Prof. Vaswani. He, upon whom descends the light of God's Grace, is granted the gift of pure, ecstatic Love. The yearning soul soars with spread-out pinions. Wounded and bleeding lies the heart that yearns. The sorrow-smitten heart suffers in silence, but does not disclose its tale of grief. Its power of perception grows as it flies on the wings of longing and it loses all taste, all yearning for things of the world.

Prof. Vaswani then put to himself the question: "Whence cometh this yearning?"

Yearning cannot be gathered from books. Prof. Vaswani knew of mighty minds and intellectuals who were ever occupied with books. Yet they possessed not the gift of a yearning heart.

Calcutta was teeming with people of diverse religions, of different sects and creeds. Each put forth the claim that his religion was superior to all, that only his religion led to God, that in the words of Sri Ramakrishna: "his watch alone was correct." This led to discussions that led to disputes which in turn often led to riots. Far from bringing men closer and uniting them in a bond of love, religious sects only served to tear them asunder, keep them apart. Prof. Vaswani aspired to keep away from such conflict and strife.

Prof. Vaswani wondered how the heart may become an abode of pure, selfless love. He realised that certain steps must needs be taken by the aspirant, the seeker on the Path. The very first step was that of "awakening".

How strange that men lived in forgetfulness

5

Their senses were lulled. They moved about but were not awake. In truth, they gazed but saw not. They hearkened but heard not. They slumbered in the sleep of forgetfulness by day and by night. They were unaware that the boat of their life tossed on the breast of the stormy ocean.

The seeker on the Path does not think it worthwhile to gather and hoard silver and gold. He prefers a life of seclusion to that of prominence, power and pelf. Rightly wrote Vaswaniji later:

Take no luggage with thee, O traveller, to the temple of the Beloved! Tread thou the path, empty-handed! And when thou wilt reach the temple, thou wilt know that the empty alone are filled.

"Awake! Arise!" said Vaswaniji later to multitudes that flocked to listen to him. "Awake! Arise! Ye who would tread the spiritual path!"

Prof. Vaswani used to take to his gurudev the questions of life as they came to him from time to time and sought his answers. Some of these questions and answers are as under:

Q. What is an awakened one to do?

A. Such a one must needs open wide the windows of his heart. Man wanders in quest outside. He forgets that He, the Atman, is within. Look within to find the Atman.

Q. How may I open wide the windows of my heart? How may I look within? How may I commune with the Spirit?

A. Keep away from conflicts and controversies and strive to grow in the spirit of devotion.

Q. What is devotion? How may I grow in the spirit of devotion?

A. Chant the Name of God. Meditate upon the glories of God. Worship God in the heart within and you will gravitate towards God. Alas! We worship God in temples and mosques, in shrines and synagogues, in churches and pagodas. But we seek Him not in the heart within where He dwells.

Q. How may I seek Him in the heart within?

A. Cry out in the anguish of the soul: "Whither shall I go to find Thee, Beloved mine?" Call Him with the cry of longing. Call Him with tears of love. Call Him with the yearning of a child for its mother.

Q. What may I do to grow in the spirit of yearning?

A. Sit in silence each day. Therefore, set apart a room or a corner of a room and repair to it in your spare time.

Q. What is silence?

A. Silence is of three types. The first is the silence of activity. Let all activity cease when you repair to your quiet corner. Let no thoughts of work disturb you in your moments of silence. Be serene that you may enter the Interior Castle.

The second is the silence of memory. Free yourself of the fret and fever of life, of all worry and vexation. You must be quiet as the tranquil sky, quiet as the silver moonbeam.

The third is the silence of desires. We are all slaves to desires. We move about with chains on our hands and feet, the chains of desires. Rise above the storm of desires and practise silence. Lay your senses to sleep, purify your mind of desires and practise silence. In order to practise such silence you require the grace of the guru. Once you receive divine grace, the recollection comes to you that this world is not your real home. God is the Homeland of your soul.

Q. How may one arrive at the Homeland of the soul?

A. When the ego—the little "I", aham—vanishes, it is then that the Eternal God within awakes. One then experiences the feeling of homelessness, one transcends oneself and becomes divine.

Therefore, aspire to grow in the spirit of devotion, in the spirit of renunciation and in the spirit of love.

Prof. Vaswani sought to put into practice the lessons he learnt at the feet of his gurudev. He, whose fame was spreading throughout Calcutta, thus strove to live a hidden life, to walk the hidden way. He aspired to be hidden in the Hidden One.

The Young Professor

Prof. Vaswani was venerated by all the students at the College, most of whom were Bengalis. Gradually a group of students grew more and more attached to him. They invited him to their homes. Their parents also held Prof. Vaswani in high esteem. Those were times when the purdah was observed by women. But in the presence of Prof. Vaswani, women discarded their purdah and spoke to him without any reserve.

Prof. Vaswani shared his spiritual experiences with this group. To those young men, who wanted to know God and were eager to learn how to live a spiritual life, Prof. Vaswani once said:

"When I was a child I loved to gaze at the stars shining in the limitless sky overhead. A feeling of awe crept over me whenever I considered the immensity of the skies. I then repeated to myself these words:

Who art thou, say?
A lump of clay.

"I fain would wish you to look at the skies and repeat to yourselves these self-same lines if you would tread the spiritual path."

Prof. Vaswani sat in the midst of this group and sought to lead the young aspirants, step by step, along the spiritual path.

"Build ye your lives on the rock of prayer," Prof. Vaswani once told the group. "Let your thoughts turn to Him first even as you wake up at morn. And as you retire to bed, let your last thoughts be of Him. Perform your actions in the spirit of worship as an offering to God. Do little acts of service everyday. Seek not to harm others, nor even to hurt the feelings of others."

He himself loved to repeat a little prayer. This prayer did he beseech the youths of Calcutta to offer in their moments of silence:

My boat is so small,
Thy sea is so vast;
Be thou the Captain of my boat,
And lead Thou me on!

The students admired their young and brilliant professor. Nay, they adored him, for he revealed to them truths of the Spirit. They keenly sought opportunities to be in his company.

Once these students approached him with a request. They wanted their young professor to join them on a picnic to a garden. He loved the youths so much that he complied with their request.

The group started at seven in the morning and, after crossing the river Ganga by a boat, reached the garden at about 8-30 a. m. As the garden was very large, it took them a good part of the day to see the whole of it. Then they sat down to lunch. They had hardly finished when they were amazed to find that huge dark clouds were gathering in the skies.

Prof. Vaswani asked his students to get ready to leave for home. But the young men had planned to be there till evening. So they stayed on. Soon it started drizzling. Prof. Vaswani, sensing that delay would be dangerous, bade his students to get ready to leave at once.

The whole group left the garden without delay and came to the bank of the river. They hired two boats and hurriedly got into them. The day began to darken as the sky became covered with a canopy of dark clouds. Soon it began to rain heavily. Lightning flashed through the veil of clouds, filling the hearts of the students with fear.

As the boats tossed and swayed on the raging waves the students became panicky. They were afraid the boat would capsize and they would be drowned. A caged beast can do naught but shake its head in despair; even so did the students, who were plunged in a sea of despair. Their only hope lay in the young professor, whose life, they felt, was precious in God's sight. If at all they were saved, they felt, it would be because of him.

Prof. Vaswani, seeing the anxious faces of the students, spoke to the boatman at the helm. He inquired if it would be possible to reach the shore. The boatman, who was a Muslim, replied: "*Allah ka asra.*" (Allah is our refuge now.)

The students heard these words and trembled in fear. They crept closer to Prof. Vaswani in order to fill their troubled hearts with the peace that flowed from his presence. One of them summoned strength and cried to him: "Sir, you alone can save us in this hour of peril." The others took up the cry and repeated these words.

Prof. Vaswani recalled how several boats had capsized in storm-tossed Ganga in the past and people had been drowned. He offered a prayer that the students be saved.

The students, who were shaken by the fury of the storm, again appealed to Prof. Vaswani and said: "Sir, you alone can save us in this hour of danger. If at all we are saved, it will be on your account alone. Tell us what we may do to be saved from the clutches of death."

Prof. Vaswani said to them: "You are nearer to God than I am, and therefore are you dearer to Him. Keep yourselves calm in this hour of crisis, difficult though it be. Lift your hearts to Him on high and sing together the maha mantra:

"Hare Ram, Hare Ram, Ram Ram Hare Hare,

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna
Hare Hare."

In the group was one who considered himself an atheist, though he was a Brahmin. A few were agnostics. But the atheist, the agnostics, as well as those who believed in God, closed their eyes and sang with one voice and all the devotion that sprang in their hearts.

Call it a miracle or what you will, after a few minutes the storm began to subside. The rebellious and raging waves, the swelling and surging waters began to quieten down and the boats began to sail smoothly. Peace was restored to the troubled hearts which erstwhile swam in a sea of despair.

Prof. Vaswani stayed in Calcutta for nearly five years. While the students showed the utmost love and reverence to him, he treated them like his younger brothers. They asked him to write autographs for them. They requested him time and again to speak on spiritual life and meditation. On such occasions, Prof. Vaswani would write little thoughts for them:

Without Him the world is a wilderness.

* * *

If you will grow, be humble as grass and patient as the tree and prayerful as the daisy that turns its face to the sun.

Prof. Vaswani always cherished in his heart a longing to have a darshan of Lokamanya Tilak. He had felt disappointed when he had tried to see the great hero on his visit to Poona in 1897, when he had been to Bombay to appear for the pre-degree examination. The Lokamanya had been then confined to Yeravada prison. Prof. Vaswani had even tried in vain to seek permission to see him in jail.

When Prof. Vaswani was in Calcutta he learnt that Tilak was visiting the city in connection with a swadeshi mela.

India had become one vast market for goods manufactured in England. Indians used mostly "Made in England" manufactures, which were available because of the trade preferences given to the goods made in England. Millions of Indian rupees were spent every year on imported goods. To check this outflow and give a fillip to Indian goods as well as to create in Indians a love for their industry and their heritage, national leaders took up the cry of "Buy Swadeshi Buy–Indian." The leaders felt that England, which is "the nation of shopkeepers", would not be interested in holding on to India if her trading interests were affected and her merchandise found little or no market in India.

A movement which bade Indians to buy India-made articles had started in those days. The leaders of this movement were men like Tilak, Gokhale and Gandhi. Indians began to take interest and pride in articles produced in their country. The glamour of foreign goods was on the wane. In order to keep up the interest of Indians in home-made articles swadeshi melas were organised.

At the melas only articles made in India were displayed and sold. Several Indians, who were regular consumers of goods made in England, felt proud to see India-made articles at these exhibitions. Such swadeshi exhibitions soon became frequent.

In order to give an added impetus to the non-cooperation movement, bonfires of foreign textiles were held in the streets of every town of India. Indians were asked to boycott shops and stalls where foreign articles were sold and to discard whatever foreign goods they had. The wave of enthusiasm would arise to such an extent that foreign articles, especially clothes, would be flung from invariably every house into the bonfire. Foreign goods would serve as fuel for fire and flames, while the people were filled with the spirit of nationalism.

Lokamanya Tilak, who was the greatest national leader of his time, was invited to open one such swadeshi exhibition in Calcutta. Thousands were eager to have his darshan. The meeting was held on a spacious terrace. Prof. Vaswani, too, went to hear him.

The function was presided over by an eminent citizen of Calcutta, Surendra Nath Bannerjee, 'of the golden voice'. Whenever he spoke, he thrilled the hearts of his listeners. Surendra Nath was an I. C. S. officer and a Magistrate. He had, however, given up his position as a government servant because of his patriotic fervour.

Before Surendra Nath addressed the gathering he clasped Tilak in a fond embrace. He then introduced the Chief Guest of the evening, greeted him warmly and also explained the purpose of the swadeshi mela.

When it was Tilak's turn to speak, a hush fell upon the audience, who were eager to listen to him. Tilak's was a thought-provoking speech. The subject of his talk was: My Ideal. He talked about his faith and his feelings.

"O ye of Bharat!" he said, "I do not believe that we should knock at the door of the government with our appeals. If we would attain Swaraj, to which we have every right, we must act courageously. We must be bold enough to tell this alien government that Swaraj is our birthright and we will have it.

"I do not believe in putting in petitions for freedom. Nor do I believe in conflicts and controversies. But I have this firm faith that we will acquire what belongs to us by right."

Lokamanya Tilak, though advanced in age, was young in spirit. His whole life had been an offering to the cause of freedom of the Motherland. Much had he suffered for this cause. He had inspired the nation with indomitable courage of his soul and his spirit of sacrifice. He hated reactionary petitions and cringing prayers. Whatever he said was law. Prof. Vaswani's heart was filled with joy as he listened to both Surendra Nath and Tilak.

Calcutta had become a second home to Prof. Vaswani who cultivated several contacts there. Calcutta was also dear to him because of its association with Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Keshub Chandra Sen and several other illustrious sons of India.

In Calcutta, Prof. Vaswani came into contact with Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore. Tagore had heard much of him and desired to meet him. One evening he paid a visit to Prof. Vaswani at his residence at Srirampur.

Prof. Vaswani was amazed to see the gifted Poet at his residence. While he felt honoured by a visit from him, he remarked: "Why did you take the trouble of coming to see me? Why did you not send me a word asking me to come and meet you?" Tagore smiled and with a twinkle in his eyes replied: "I waited in the hope that you would pay me a visit. But I could not wait longer and so I came away."

Prof. Vaswani and Tagore had a frank and friendly heart-to-heart talk with each other. When two great and gifted souls meet, it is a sight for the gods to see. These two sons of Bharat were destined to spread the message of their motherland all over the world.

When Tagore started the Santiniketan, his thoughts immediately went to Vaswaniji who in his opinion was the fittest person to be in charge. He requested Vaswaniji to become the Head of Santiniketan. Vaswaniji had his own work to do and so asked to be forgiven.

Years later, when Vaswaniji learnt of the passing away of Poet Tagore, he paid him a glowing tribute in the following words:–

Beloved of my heart!
Poet of Humanity thou art!
And centuries still will salute thee:
In thee will India attain the glory
Of her destined life!

* * *

And this Day I,–a homeless one,–
Bring thee a garland touched with tears.
O Love ! Thou once didst sing
In Bharat's blessed Land:
Then opening soft the Door
Thou didst depart!
Will thou not come again?

In the days Prof. Vaswani was in Bengal, Pratap Chandra Mozumdar was one of the most prominent men of Calcutta. He was an eloquent speaker who held his listeners spell-bound by his speeches and inspired and enthralled their minds and hearts. He visited Europe and America where also he gave a series of lectures.

Mozumdar was a man of renunciation. Though married, he lived a life of celibacy. Prof. Vaswani bowed to him in reverence. When he was asked at school, to select some books to be given to him as a prize, he had selected four books of Mozumdar, whom he regarded as a brahmagyani.

Pratap Chandra Mozumdar was confined to bed when Prof. Vaswani met him. When he learnt that Prof. Vaswani came from Sind, he said during the course of their conversation: "Let me tell you that you, Sindhis, are wonderful people. You are known for your hospitality and devotion."

Prof. Vaswani felt happy to hear these words concerning his beloved community, coming from the mouth of such a great personality.

It was the year 1908. Prof. Vaswani's elder brother, Pahlajrai, had come to know that the post of Professor of Philosophy had fallen vacant in the D. J. Sind College, Karachi. He wrote to Prof. Vaswani to apply for it without delay as he wanted him to be close to Hyderabad. They could then meet each other frequently.

Prof. Vaswani always respected Pahlajrai's word. He consulted Naluda who also advised him to send his application. As the date for the application was about to expire, Prof. Vaswani sent a long well-worded telegram.

The Karachi College authorities were only too glad to have a Professor of Vaswani's calibre. Destiny thus brought Prof. Vaswani back to Karachi after a period of five years.

Prof. Vaswani taught Philosophy in the D. J. Sind College. He also started the evening Gita and Sukhmani classes. His lectures on philosophy, which had also a literary touch, had depth in them. Students of other classes, too, felt eager to attend his lectures. In his lectures they felt thrilled and inspired and their minds as well as hearts were uplifted.

Dr. Jackson, an Irishman, was the Principal of the College when Vaswani joined as Professor. The Principal, seeing how very popular Prof. Vaswani was, used to request him to give lectures for other Professors also when they were absent. In addition to Philosophy, Prof. Vaswani had mastery over History and English literature. So he did not experience any difficulty in giving lectures in these subjects.

He took with himself to the class slips of paper on which he prepared his notes. This habit of his continued to the last when he used to address large fellowship meetings.

The hearts of some College students were filled with the aspiration for the higher life. In Prof. Vaswani, they found one who could guide them on the Path. They accordingly desired to remain in close contact with him. They requested him to start an ashrama. Prof. Vaswani, whose heart God had linked with the young, approved of the idea and an ashrama sprang into existence.

The central figure in every ashrama is a rishi, a man of illumination. Prof. Vaswani, who had been acclaimed by several thinkers as a modern rishi, was the central figure of the Karachi ashrama. This ashrama was situated in rented rooms in a crowded quarter. Like an ancient ashrama, it was not situated in a secluded spot, but it had, of course, a rishi for its presiding deity.

"Character," says the great German rishi, Goethe, "is not taught. Character is caught." Students in the Karachi ashrama caught character as they came in close contact with Prof. Vaswani. He, in turn, prepared them to become servants of India and Humanity. Like a true rishi he widened their consciousness. He asked his pupils to sit in silence everyday and to attune their souls to the Spirit within.

"Krishna took up the flute: and as he sang, the music of the heart rang through the souls of multitudes.

His song: 'The Song of God,' still our hearts doth sway, while crowns and kingdoms have passed away," spoke Prof. Vaswani in his gentle and flute-like voice.

Prof. Vaswani always spoke enthusiastically about the Gita, the Song of Krishna. "The Truth of all truths, the Gita urges, is Love. This supreme affirmation of the Gita has been the turning point in the lives of many bhaktas (devotees) of Krishna, many who have rejoiced in the way of the Gita." He, who was himself an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna, sought to fill the hearts of his hearers with the spirit of devotion and love for Lord Krishna.

Michael Naimy in "The Book of Mirdad" puts these words in the mouth of Mirdad when his disciples express a desire to pray:

"Go! Pray as you have been taught to pray. Pray anyway—for anything. Go! Do all the things commanded you to do till you become self-taught and self-commanded, and till you learn to make each word a prayer, each deed a sacrifice. Go in peace!"

Prof. Vaswani, too, wanted the ashramites to pray, for prayer is the eye with which one beholds God. He, no doubt, wanted them too to make each word a prayer and each deed a sacrifice. He also wanted them to pray for those about them and around them and for those beneath them as well. He often prayed in their presence while they listened to him in rapt attention.

It is likely Prof. Vaswani offered a prayer of this type:

Thus I aspire and thus I pray at the lotus-feet of the Lord:

O Lord! guard Thou the poor for they cry for bread and they wander homeless in the autumn rains and cold of winter!

Have mercy upon them whom men have made criminals by denying them work and bread and then have chained them in jails!

O Lord ! guard Thou the needy and the weak who knock at the door of the proud and receive insults for alms.

Watch Thou over them who lie prostrate in pain of illness.

O Lord! bless the little birds. They sing the songs which purify the hearts. And protect the mild-eyed cow and the dog and the horse and every beast from the cruel hand of man.

O Lord! protect the trees and the fields from thunder and storm and from the ravages of wild barbarians who, with the war-shout on their lips, wander in violence and lust!

Open the hearts of all who claim kinship with humanity that they may aspire to peace and brotherhood.

Bless the fish in the sea and the reptiles and insects of the earth: for they, too, are Thy children!

And Thy way is Mercy and Thy Name is Love!

The eyes of the students must have shone with expectation before they listened to Prof. Vaswani's prayers. After the prayers their eyes must have been touched with tears; they must have been so moved by the voice and the vision of Vaswani. It is likely these prayers reminded the students of St. Francis who years ago had sung the Canticle of the Sun. The words: "Reverence for life" of Dr. Albert Schweitzer, the Sage of Lambarene, of their own days, also must have echoed in their ears as they listened to such soul-stirring prayers.

St. Anne has said: "Starve that others may eat. Wake that others may sleep." Prof. Vaswani, too, was of this view and he never for once fully satisfied the craving of his stomach. He made it a point to eat less than his fill. "Countless souls starve. We grow in the sense of kinship with them in the measure in which we fail to appease our appetite," he remarked whenever he was pressed to eat more food.

Prof. Vaswani also bade his students to be careful of their thoughts. He once said:

"A man becometh what he thinketh upon,"—says an ancient scripture of India. And the American story-writer saw its truth when he wrote his beautiful little story of the "Great Stone Face,"—the story which tells of a boy who thought upon the "Great Stone Face" which was on the rock above his village,—thought of it as the Face like unto that of one who should come in the fulness of time to guide his people to greatness,—thought of it again and again, till his own face resembled the one on the rock and his people looked up to him as their Leader and Liberator.

"What you think upon constantly passes into you, becomes a part of you, colours your thought and emotion. Therefore I fain would ask of you to be careful of your thoughts," he urged.

Prof. Vaswani often was asked to speak and preside at several meetings organised at the D. J. Sind College. Other organisations also sought him. The Commissioner of Sind as well as other officials regarded it as a privilege to preside at the meetings he addressed. They felt they were in the presence of a superior being. To see his childlike face was to be reminded of the Kingdom of God; to hear him was to feel they were in the presence of a Prophet of God.

Even while Vaswani was a Professor in the D. J. Sind College, he was being hailed as a sage and a seer, a teacher and a rishi by the people of Karachi. In the year 1910, Prof. Vaswani was invited to attend, as one of India's representatives, the Welt Congress—the World Congress of Religions—which was being held at Berlin in Germany.

Seventeen years prior, a similar Conference, called the Parliament of Religions, had been held at Chicago, in U.S.A. Swami Vivekananda, the foremost disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, had addressed this

Conference and preached the message of India. In the year 1910, Prof. Vaswani was to be one of India's representatives to this second World Congress of Religions. The other three, who had been invited to the Congress, were:

(1) Sri Promotholal Sen, Prof. Vaswani's gurudev.
(2) Sri Heramp Chandra Moitre, Principal of the City College of Calcutta.
(3) Professor Teja Singh, a profound scholar, who was to represent the Sikh Community.

Prof. Vaswani, who had just turned thirty, was the youngest of the four. When he received the invitation he debated within himself whether or not to attend the Conference. He was not aware that his gurudev, too, had been invited. On second thought he felt that the time was not ripe for him to address a large audience. He felt that, since he had not yet crushed his own ego, he was not worthy of the honour that was being conferred upon him. So he declined the offer. He wrote to his gurudev all about the invitation and his reply to the Congress.

Sri Promotholal Sen, who was in Calcutta, had decided to attend the Conference along with his dear 'Boka'. When he came to know that Prof. Vaswani had declined the invitation, he hastened to write him a letter.

"Write at once to the Congress, intimating that you are accepting the invitation," commanded the guru to the disciple. The question of Prof. Vaswani's attending the Conference was thus decided by one higher than he. To a true disciple, the word of the guru is the Word of God. God speaks to the disciple through the guru. Prof. Vaswani bowed to the dictates of the Will Divine and made preparation for the voyage. The thought, that he would once again be with his gurudev, gave him boundless joy.

Prof. Vaswani's heart was nevertheless filled with certain misgivings. Would the people of the West, who were slaves of ambition, listen to him? England, France, Germany and other places all over the Continent had a craze for power. Europe rang with shouts of

"Progress" and slogans of "Democracy". The West was enamoured of scientific achievements and industrial civilisation. Indian students, who went abroad for higher studies, returned completely changed because of Western influences. They believed in the cult of comfort, used their time in amassing wealth and pursued "greatness". Sri Rama and Sri Krishna for them were fictitious figures and not supermen of history. Indian students went to the West with hearts full of faith. They returned over-burdened with barren intellect widely developed. Would the people of the West listen to the message of the East, which was the message of her sages and seers, her rishis and saints, who were men of vision and faith?

Prof. Vaswani thought of going to Europe in the spirit of a pilgrim, a *yatri*. He was just thirty years of age. He was so humble that he felt he had no right to speak to the people of the West. The two essential marks of a true pilgrim are Purity and Love. Prof. Vaswani prayed that during his sojourn to the West he may live a pure life and spread the sunshine of love.

Prof. Vaswani went to Hyderabad to bid good-bye to his mother and all his near and dear ones and to receive their blessings. Varandevi would not have consented to her son's visit abroad. Hardly anyone from her family had left the shores of India and crossed the oceans. However, she knew that the honour was so great that she must not stand in his way. She, along with other members of her family, gave him blessings in abundance. Prof. Vaswani returned to Karachi and proceeded to Bombay where his gurudev awaited him.

Prof. Vaswani used to wear Parsi dress in those days —trousers, long coat and a cap. As he was going to Europe as a representative of India, he thought he should give some Indian touch to his dress. So he purchased a ready-made turban (head-gear) to wear while he was abroad.

Both Sadhu Sen and his "Boka", Prof. Vaswani, sailed from Bombay aboard the ship bound for Germany in the month of July 1910.

With a prayer upon his lips for " Light, more Light" this "child of the Desert" born in a mud-house, this "seeker after Truth" starts on his strange venture to address men and women of the West. He will soon speak to them even as speaks a mountain to plains, a cloud to blades of grass, and a star to lotuses in the lake.

Alas! people grope in the darkness of desires. They have fallen easy prey to ego and avarice. They realise not the futility of prestige and power, prejudice and passion. They have been blinded by the false glitter and glamour of gold. They are bewildered by a phantasmagoria of illusions.

Even as Prof. Vaswani proceeds on his quest the one constant cry upon his lips is that of "Awake! Arise!" Even as the mystic moves on, he strives to lift the veils which conceal from human eyes the riches and splendour of the spirit. Even as the seer, the sage goes forth, he asks multitudes to rise to a new vision of life, to live a life of compassion and kindliness, peace and brotherliness, love and devotion, service and sacrifice, truth, righteousness and beauty.

The offspring of the desert, the illumined son of Bharat crosses the threshold of India and goes to the Continent. The streamlët, springing from the snow-clad summit, blesses the land through which it flows and fertilizes it. Meandering through mountainous regions, its waters during its course gather in volume and momentum. Even so this celestial stream of light, during its course, grows in splendour and intensity. This enormous light blesses countless souls and serves to lead them out of darkness into light!

Bridge Between East and West

Professor Vaswani had always been fascinated by the sea from his early childhood. Now that he was sailing, he spent several hours gazing at its waters and breathing in an atmosphere of the Infinite. The sea entranced him by day; the moon held him spellbound by night. The beauty and the vastness of the scene filled him with wonder and awe! His thoughts turned to Him who had created the sea and the moon. He longed to behold the Beautous One and to commune with the Eternal.

On 24 July 1910 the ship reached Aden. In those days Aden was a small port used as a coaling station. Prof. Vaswani went ashore for sight-seeing and saw the narrow streets and the spacious houses of Aden. They reminded him of his home town, Hyderabad, in Sind. His thoughts flew to the narrow Vaswani lane and to the mud-house where his mother resided. He was deeply delighted to see a *Gurudwara* (a Sikh Temple) in Aden.

An Englishman accosted Prof. Vaswani on the way and inquired if he knew English and the standard in which he studied; Prof. Vaswani looked so very young!

Arab children were in the habit of begging coins from tourists. Prof. Vaswani gave plenty of them to these poor children.

On board the ship, yet another Englishman came and spoke to him. He also had the impression that Prof. Vaswani did not know English and was just a school student. Prof. Vaswani, far from being irritated, felt amused.

The ship then sailed for Port Said. Fond of nature as he was, he spent most of his time on the deck, even though he was a cabin passenger. From the deck chair he drank in the beauty of nature as he had done on the two previous voyages, when he had gone from Karachi to Bombay for his University examinations.

As his ship took him farther away from his motherland, his mind often lifted up to God. With dew-dimmed eyes he looked at the waves of the vast expanse stretched out before him. Seized by the beauty and splendour of the scene, he was inspired to say these lines to himself:

Where'er I look, I do behold
The beauty of His Face untold!
The music of His Name I hear,
In every nook it ringeth clear.

Sitting on the deck at nights, he often lost count of time. The hours slipped by as he sat absorbed in the Infinite.

Prof. Vaswani had the habit of sitting in silence every morning. He opened some holy scripture at random and meditated on the deeper meaning of the passages unfolded to him. He then strove to implement them in his daily life.

One morning ,as he sat in silence, he read these stirring words: "Be not away from the *atman*, O man!"

Pondering over these words of the rishi, Prof. Vaswani felt that the rishi in these words had emphasized that man must cultivate the soul and he who remained away from the *atman* fell into sin. The sinless one was he who had cultivated his soul, who had conquered his senses. He reflected: How doth man succumb to sin? Man falls prey to sin when he keeps himself away from the *atman*, when he controls not his senses.

The rishi's words appealed to him for they were profound in significance. As he pondered more and more over them the following reflections came to him:—

Keep the senses away from the *atman* and you are attracted by the objects of the senses which lead you into sin.

You are assailed by greed and long to usurp another's wealth. So it is that men resort to cheating and swindling. Therefore, keep not yourself away from the *atman*!

Keep not the feet away from the *atman*! Feet too are organs of the senses. We walk with their aid and yet trample upon others. Feet are really meant to walk in the Path of service, to help others. Therefore, let not your feet remain away from the *atman*!

Consider the eyes. How do the eyes of most of us work? Our eyes have not learnt to see aright. We behold a beautiful form and fall into sin, whereas we should exclaim: "This beautiful form is also Thine, O Lord, for it is an expression of the Eternal Unseen!" But our eyes become satanic. Therefore, keep not your eyes away from the *atman*!

Think of the mind. It is so fickle and so frivolous; it wanders and is restless. It keeps building castles in the air. Even at night before going to sleep, the mind is active and at work, busy planning. We fall into sin for we keep the mind away from the *atman*.

Prof. Vaswani also read about *brahmaloka* and *kewalam* in the sayings of the rishi and analysed their true meaning. Even as he meditated, he realised that the ideal of life lay in *kewalam*.

Kewalam means unity, oneness, at-one-ment with the One. "Thou alone art, O Lord!"

It is necessary for the aspirant to concentrate on the One. The question arises how the state of *kewalam* may be arrived at.

That brought him to yet another term: *neti*

The rishi in the Upanishad says: "Whatever you see, say: '*Neti! Neti!* Not this! Not that!' This house is not God. Brahm is neither 'this' nor 'that'. Neither honour, nor wealth, nor lust is the true Reality. Wherever you look and whatever you behold, say: 'He is greater than the greatest.' "

Thus Prof. Vaswani spent a lot of time in prayer and meditation. He also read books and wrote letters. He woke up daily at 3·30 a.m., got ready in an hour's time and sat for prayers. He had tea at 6.15 a.m., again sat in meditation and prayer from 7 to 8 a.m. Then for an hour he did some work and took his breakfast. Thereafter again he lifted his heart to worship God, enjoyed his gurudev's company, attended to reading and writing and passed sometime on the deck. After lunch, at noon, he had his afternoon siesta, till it was time for tea. He attended to his correspondence from 5 to 6 p.m. Dinner was served at 6·30 p.m. after which he sat on the deck for some hours. On return to his cabin, he read books and retired to bed at 11 p.m.

Once he suffered from sea-sickness and got an attack of fever. His gurudev took care of him even as a tender-hearted mother would attend to her sick child and soon nursed him back to health. He felt ashamed of himself at being a burden to his gurudev. At the same time he was grateful to him for looking after him. He was certain that it was all owing to the grace of his gurudev, that he had been rapidly restored to health.

On July 26 the ship reached Suez Canal and approached Port Said where some Sindhi merchants carried on trade. Although Sindhis have been scattered all over the world after the partition of India, even in those days they could be found in almost every part of the world. Sindhis are known for their spirit of enterprise, hospitality and devotion.

News of Prof. Vaswani's trip to Germany had preceded him. The Sindhi merchants at Port Said had heard much of him. Though these merchants had never seen him personally, they desired to meet him and receive his blessings. Therefore, they decided to invite him to visit one of their shops where they all would gather together and meet him.

Accordingly, they deputed two Sindhi gentlemen to meet Prof. Vaswani at the ship and bring him to the shop. Prof. Vaswani was surprised when these two accosted him and inquired if he was Prof. Vaswani. "We have come to take you to town where members of our community have gathered to meet you," they said. "Won't you kindly come with us?"

Prof. Vaswani expressed his doubts whether the ship would stop at Port Said long enough for him to return in time. On their assurance, he accompanied them to their shop and was happy to meet the members of his community. He returned to the ship in time.

Prof. Vaswani had been surprised to see poor Arab children begging coins from tourists at the port of Aden. His experience at Port Said was bitter. He shuddered to see Arabs doing the tough job of breaking huge boulders. His heart was filled with pity to see the Arabs earning their livelihood by the sweat of their brow. He at once made this entry in his dairy: "This sinful civilisation is built on the patience of the poor."

The ship set sail and, passing through the Suez Canal, touched the shore of the River Nile known for its blue waters. These blue waters reminded Prof. Vaswani of Sri Krishna, the Beloved of his heart. The blue waves symbolised for him the Blue-Eyed Babe of Brindaban.

Prof. Vaswani's thoughts at this stage turned to the Welt Congress where he had to deliver a speech. As he had left India hurriedly, he had not prepared his speech, prior to departure. Now that he was nearing Berlin, he thought it was high time that he worked on his speech. He was seated as usual in his deck chair pondering over the speech, when certain thoughts flashed through his mind.

He first recalled an ancient prayer of the rishis, pure in aspiration and rich in wisdom. This prayer he was fond of repeating everyday: "*Tamaso Ma Jyotir Gamaya*", which means " Lead me out of darkness into light."

This prayer, he felt, would be a fitting prelude to his speech at the Welt Congress. For in this prayer was summed up the teaching of the rishis, the message of India. This message, he thought, he should deliver unto nations from the platform of the Welt Congress.

One significant thought led to another. He recalled the wonderful words of Gautama Buddha, the words Buddha had spoken to his beloved disciple, Ananda: "*Atto dipa!*" Be ye lights unto yourselves! Let the light of your self guide you along the Path.

The third thought that swiftly followed concerned the light. It was the light of the *atman* to which the Gita and the Upanishads refer so frequently.

King Janaka once asked the great sage Yagnavalkya: "What is the light of man, O rishi of great renown?"

And Yagnavalkya answered: "The sun, O king, for with the sun, indeed, as the light, one sits, moves about, does one's work and returns."

Not content with this answer, the king asked again: "When the sun is set, what is the light of man?"

And the rishi replied: "The moon, O king, for with the moon, indeed, as the light, one sits, moves about, does one's work and returns."

But the king asked again: "When the sun has set and the moon has set, O sage, what is the light of man?"

And Yagnavalkya said: "Fire is the light of man, when both the moon and sun are set; for with the fire, indeed, as the light, one sits, moves about, does one's work and returns."

Still unsatisfied, the king asked: "When the sun and the moon are set and the fire is extinguished and all other outer lights have failed and the whole world is wrapped in darkness, tell me, O sage, what is the light of man?"

And the sage answered: "Speech, indeed, is the light, for with the speech, indeed, as the light, one sits, moves about, does one's work and returns."

The king asked again: "When the sun and the moon are set, when the fire is gone out, when the outer sources of light have failed, when the world is enveloped in darkness and speech has stopped, O sage, what is the light of man?"

And Yagnavalkya answered: "The Self then is the light, O king; for with the Self, indeed, as the light, one sits, moves about, does one's work and returns."

Yes, it is the light of the Self, the light of the *atman* that shines forth; the True Light that is never extinguished, the Eternal Light of man. So it is that when a man's *atman* is awake he never finds himself surrounded by darkness, for he has passed out of darkness into light.

This led to yet another profound thought. How may one behold the Light of the *atman*? For this, awakening is essential. How may this awakening come? Prof. Vaswani recalled a line of a Sindhi poet. This line he had repeatedly heard in his native place, Hyderabad:

Awake ! Arise ! Sleep not, O Mind !

Men were immersed in sleep, for they slept the sleep of ignorance, for they were awake but could see not. Awakening or *atman*-consciousness comes in the measure in which men translate into action the holy words of the sages and saints.

His thoughts next turned to the Upanishad. He recalled a term of the Upanishad he had often heard: "*mokshdwar*". *Mokshdwar* means self-realisation.

"What one must seek is self-realisation," he said to himself. " When one attains self-realisation, one's search is ended."

He then recalled yet another term used in the scriptures, *dwarpal*. It means gate-keeper. There are four *dwarpals* who lead you to the Kingdom of Heaven which is within. The following reflections regarding the *dwarpals* next came to him:—

1) *Sham* —self-discipline. To tread the path of self-realisation, the seeker must discipline himself. He must control what his mind conceives by the power of his *atman*. Self-discipline is an instrument to build a strong, healthy mind generating pure thoughts. It is in the nature of bar-bells used by athletes to build strong, healthy bodies. The "seeker" must cultivate this quality if he is to proceed along the Path.

2) Meditation—Practise meditation. Develop the power of concentration. The mind is restless. The mind is a rebel. Persist in purifying the senses. Practice alone makes one perfect. Practise sitting in silence for at least half an hour everyday until you delve deeper and deeper into the realm of the *atman*.

3) Serenity—One must firmly retain a rational balance during the trials and tribulations of life. One must not allow oneself to be swept off one's feet by "the slings and arrows of the outrageous fortune." This would mean considering every sorrow as a message from God, every pain as a process of self-purification and every ache as an invitation to help the inner eye to behold the beauty of the soul. One does not progress along the path of self-realisation until one grows in the spirit of serenity. Rightly runs an Italian proverb: "Success is theirs that are serene."

4) *Saddha-Sangam* — fellowship with noble souls. The soul that would progress along the Path must keep contact with saints and also with the True and the Good.

Self-discipline, Meditation, Serenity, and Saddha-Sangam are the four *dwarpals* which lead the soul from darkness into life eternal. These were the points on which Prof. Vaswani decided to base his speech which was to stir the hearts of the hearers at the Welt Congress.

The ship next docked at Naples. From Naples he travelled to Rome. Here he was greatly impressed by the cleanliness and spaciousness of Saint Mary's Church.

He was, however, more impressed by the quiet atmosphere of the church. He recalled the teaching of the rishis, who taught their disciples to seek God in silence, away from the maddening crowds and currents of confusion.

The walls of St. Mary's Church were adorned with pictures and portraits of Christian saints. He was moved by an evidence of the artists' spirit of deep reverence in the paintings of the saints and sages.

Prof. Vaswani believed profoundly in reverence for saints and supermen of history, which he considered as true hero-worship. He was of the view that India would rise to a nobler stage and become the leader of nations when her children became filled with the spirit of hero-worship. Such a spirit, he said, awoke the best elements in man.

Years later, when Vaswaniji founded the Mira Movement in Education, he dedicated a room in the Mira Building to the memory of great ones and the hall was named " The Hall of Heroes". In this room were hung the pictures of saints and heroes, great and gifted men and women of the East and West. Here students sat at the feet of the great ones and received the inspiration of their deeds and devoted lives.

Prof. Vaswani also saw the huge amphitheatre of Rome which could accomodate nearly two hundred thousand people. However, he could not help feeling sad, when he thought of the tragic atrocities committed there, how beasts were brought in to fight one another and men and women applauded the winner; how slaves and early Christians were thrown into the arena to face hungry beasts and were finally devoured by them. While the victims were brutally torn to pieces the Romans rejoiced!

To his mind came the message of the rishis of India: Be brotherly! Build your lives in the power of humility, sympathy and love.

He visited the beautiful city of Milan, famous for its marble statues. He could not help remembering St. Xavier from Milan who came to India and settled down in Goa. As Prof. Vaswani moved through the streets of Milan he recalled the touching words St. Xavier loved to repeat: "What doth it profit a man to gain the whole world but lose his own soul?"

A few fragments from the extracts recorded in the "Pocket-Diary", which Prof. Vaswani had kept on board the ship, are as under:

Lying in my cabin, I think of St. Francis Xavier. On his way to Japan, he had on board the vessel an attack of fever: and his fever continued to rise: St. Francis continued to say in his fever: "Suffering! more suffering, Lord!"

* * * *

It is evening. I am in my chair on the deck. I watch the waves. I ask myself:- "What is the message of the Sea?" Is it not the message of Shakti? Wave after wave cometh out of the depth of the sea and beats against our boat. In history, too, we see how wave after wave cometh out of the Heart of the World Whole, and over the waves ride some great ones,—Leaders, Generals, Patriots, Heroes, Teachers, Poets, Rishis, Saints. We call them the 'Builders of Nations.' But the Real Builder is the Eternal Shakti from whose heart come forth waves on which are thrown up the great ones of history.

* * * *

I go to Europe as a 'Pilgrim'. My 'voyage' is a 'pilgrimage'. The Pilgrim looks forward. "What will ye buy?" —one asked some medieval pilgrims: and they answered :-"We buy the Truth." In quest of Truth I go! Truth is my country. A pilgrim is a stranger to the world: he goes in a simple garb, with a longing for the Unseen and in quest of the Truth. So I go!

* * * *

In the modern era there is the apotheosis of 'work' and the Eternal God is forgotten. But Carlyle had a true perception when he said:- "All work is an appeal to the Unseen!" And again and again, in my heart I invoke the Lord: "In all my work may I come nearer to Thee, O Lord of Life!"

* * * *

India,—the India of the Rishis,—is my dream by day, my vision by night. I go to the World-Congress of Religions in the spirit of a *jignasu*. A *jignasu* seeks the Truth. As a Truth- seeker I go; and I feel that Truth is infinite. No one view may express the unutterable Fulness of Truth.

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I hear two Englishmen talk of Germany and England: alas! the relations between their two countries are already strained. And I say to myself:—"Is not the world's piteous need a Movement of Reconciliation?"

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I hear a revered gentleman speaking ill of Germany and in support of his attitude he quotes from the book, 'Book of Revelation'. "What a fanciful interpretation," I say to myself, " he gives of the great Jewish seer's Book of Revelation!"

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I saw a small Sikh temple: the Guru Granth Sahib was there. The Guru Granth is Humanity's first great Scripture of Synthesis: the hymns of Hindu seers and the songs of Muslim saints have been blended in this Great Book in one harmonious whole: I bowed down to the Guru Granth Sahib in lowly reverence. If we stand reverent before the sunset and the waterfall, how natural its seems to bow down in reverence to what is, to my mind, a miracle of history–the inspired utterances of the spiritual geniuses of race!

* * * *

I go to bed with this prayer in my heart:-"Let me think of Heaven, more than of the world. In Yoga or Communion with Thee is Peace: so help me Lord! to dwell with Thee within my heart !"

In Berlin

Professor Vaswani took the train from Italy and reached Berlin on 7 August 1910. He saw crowds of people moving about quietly on the platform at Berlin station. The quiet atmosphere of the station was quite a contrast for him who had always witnessed noisy scenes at the railway platforms in India. He was also surprised to see everyone well-dressed, including the porters.

In those days, the Germans had the impression that the Indians who visited Europe were either Maharajas or millionaires. Therefore, Prof. Vaswani and his gurudev were escorted to one of the most luxurious hotels of Berlin.

Prof. Vaswani, who believed in the value of austerity and who was used to sleeping on the hard floor, felt very uncomfortable with the surrounding luxuries in the hotel. He could not get a wink of sleep at night on the soft bed. After a restless night on his bed, he was glad to greet the rising sun. He offered his prayers as usual, then ate breakfast and went for sight-seeing. The Welt Congress was to be held two days later.

In the streets of Berlin, children laughed at his turban. They looked at him as if he were a two-footed animal rather than a human being. Once a child ventured to ask him: " May I know the time, please?" thinking that he would get no reply. Prof. Vaswani glanced at his watch and told him the time. The child was delighted and astonished too. He exclaimed to his mother: "Mommy, it speaks !" This incident highly amused Prof. Vaswani who moved about like one detached in thought and spirit.

At the gateway of Berlin stood a huge statue representing Science. Great is the vision of Science, he said to himself; great–but not adequate.

He also saw two other impressive statues of eminent Germans,—Frederick the Great, the builder of Berlin, and Bismark, the great German politician. However, he wished to pay the homage of his heart to Goethe, –the great poet and philosopher, scholar and statesman, –but whom he considered to be a *brahmagyani*.

The preliminary meeting of the Welt Congress was to be held on 9 August 1910 at 10 p. m. It was open to the delegates only. At this meeting a delegate from each country was to speak a few words by way of introduction. The Indian delegation appointed Sri Promotholal Sen, Prof. Vaswani's gurudev, to speak at the meeting. He gave a brief and beautiful speech in which he said:

"Asia has been the birthplace of every renewal of religion, every great spiritual awakening, renovation. In the field of religion there have been leaders who have brought such awakenings. The first is Sri Krishna concerning whom the people of the West know not much. The second is Gautama Buddha with whose name the western world is familiar. The third is Jesus Christ.

"In the West as in the East, have come awakenings. But all such awakenings have been shaped, age after age, by one of these leaders of the East—by Krishna, Buddha or Christ.

" Europe has been influenced for sometime past by India's cult and civilisation. The sacred waters of the Ganges of the Spirit have flowed from the East to the West. People of the West should purify themselves by bathing in these sacred waters for their civilisation is desire-dominated. O ye of the West! Bathe yourselves, cleanse yourselves, purify yourselves in sacred waters that flow freely. Drink of this water and make your lives pure and enrich them.

"By love shall ye attain! There hath been, alas! conflict in the religious world; mutual suspicions, jealousies, and mutual antagonisms; ill-will and hatred have slandered the fair name of religion. By love alone shall ye attain!"

Now dawned the day of the Conference proper when the delegates had to deliver their speeches. Prof. Vaswani began his speech with the words: "Sisters and Brothers!" All eyes were focussed on him because none had so far addressed the Conference thus. Fourteen years earlier, Swami Vivekananda had stirred the hearts of the American people at the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago by addressing them in a similar way.

Words flowed from Prof. Vaswani's mouth like "the purifying waters of the Ganges",—a phrase already used by his gurudev in his speech on the previous night. "I bring to you," he said, "the Ancient Message, the Message of the *Atman*, which is the need of Western theology and Western life." All the sisters and brothers assembled at the Congress listened with rapt attention as he unfolded the teachings of the rishis of India. He went on to explain that there was a craving for a spiritual synthesis of the meaning and values of experiences. India, he believed, could give such a synthesis.

"India's life through the centuries has been one long quest for the living Infinite Ideal," he said. "Her mind, eager for a vision of the world-whole, has faced the problem of reality in the faith that the organism of the experience is spiritual. Her ruling passion has been the *Adhyatam Vidya*: the science of the Self.

"Realize the Self! Therefore, let not man become a slave to others in order to earn worldly wealth and honours, fame and name. Let not even the poorest forget that he has the rich heritage of the soul and so let him stand up in courage and self-respect to declare the divinity in him. Our spiritual heritage is a witness to the immortality of the soul. Inheritors of Immortality, let us, not wander as beggars, as exiles in the House of life!"

Prof: Vaswani, in the course of his speech, quoted the German poet, Goethe, who regarded the soul as immortal. "This, too, is the teaching of the Gita. This is the message much needed by the West dominated by science and industrial civilisation."

Prof. Vaswani next laid emphasis on the thought of reverence which, according to Goethe, he said, was of three kinds:

1) Reverence for one's self, reverence for the *atman*.
2) Reverence for what is around us.
3) Reverence for what is beneath us, below us, for the humblest and poorest of all living things, for the birds and beasts; for they are in no way inferior to us.

"Therefore love them and serve them. By showing reverence for what is beneath us we may have true self-reverence, which is reverence for what is within us and above us and around us; the self that is the In-soul of all."

"A new art may then be born," he continued, "a new vision of beauty then may come to us; a new comprehension of brotherhood may then be ours."

He concluded: "The Aryan sages saw the synthesis of life and expressed it in the simple, stately words: 'The Eternal is one; He hath no caste!' This *atma vidya* India offers to the West."

His fine physique, his graceful form, his radiant face, his mystic eyes and above all the turban on his head, had already attracted the notice of the people. After having heard him their hearts were captivated.

Years later, writing about Prof. Vaswani's visit to Germany, Sri. J. P. Vaswani, Editor, East and West Series, wrote as under:

> "His speech at the Parliament of Religions had already aroused deep interest in Indian thought and Religion. His subsequent lectures inspired the people with noble impulses and with a feeling of love for India. They beheld one of India's sons who was learned and enlightened, who was at once a scholar and a philosopher, who dared to believe in the Spirit and who had the courage to pass on the teachings of the Upanishads and the Gita, and who taught the truth of self-denial as the secret of civilisation and art of life."

As soon as the session was over a number of admirers from amongst the audience surrounded Prof. Vaswani. Although in his thirties, he had a broad and catholic vision. They were anxious to learn from him concerning India and her wonderful message.

Newspapers of Berlin requested the delegates for their photographs for publication. Prof. Vaswani had always regarded photography as fantasy, an illusion. He declined to be photographed.

Because of his readers' clamour to see the picture of Prof. Vaswani, an enterprising editor, who failed to persuade Prof. Vaswani to give his photograph, printed a picture of Prof. Tejasing with his son. The caption read: "Professor T. L. Vaswani and his son." Prof. Vaswani was greatly surprised as well as amused.

On the eve of his departure from Berlin, Prof. Vaswani visited the Academy of Science and Seminary of Oriental Languages. Here German professors and men of learning and scholarship studied Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and other oriental languages. He found Prof. Winternitz deeply absorbed in study in the seminary. Prof. Winternitz was an eminent scholar of Sanskrit and Pali and ancient Indian Literature. During his visit to the seminary, he had an interesting talk with Prof. Winternitz on India and Indian culture. Many years later, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore invited Prof. Winternitz as a visiting professor to Shantiniketan.

In England

From Germany, Prof. Vaswani travelled to France and thence to England. In England, he gave his first lecture at Rosylin in Stopford Brook's Chapel. The subject of his talk was: "What Europe needs."

"What Europe needs," Prof. Vaswani told the gathering in his soft but firm voice, "is the message that humanity is one and that spiritual ideals are not illusions but the secret of the renewal and advance of civilisation. You are in pursuit of power and greatness. Scramble not for power and position, nor seek greatness. All material power corrupts. All greatness ends in downfall and destruction. When a country, a nation, a community, an individual worships power and when ambition kneels before the majesty of money, you may be sure that decay will set in."

"Europe needs must obey the law of the simple life," Prof. Vaswani continued. "Europe's social and political programmes should be based upon love of simplicity or vitality. Simplify! Simplify! Be simple in your daily life, in your dress and food. In simplicity is the seed of national strength."

"Think of Tolstoy," he told them, "whom

I regard as the rishi of Russia. He was born in a mansion having 42 rooms; he died in a lonely room. Wealth surrounded him; but there comes upon him the great change of life. I call it 'rebirth' in this birth. He stripped himself of worldly goods and the luxury in which he was cradled; he wore rough clothes of a peasant; he made his shoes with his own hands; he swept his own room; he ate simple food. Tolstoy, upon whom came the great change, brought a change in Russia."

" Europe, alas! wanders and is unhappy," he concluded. "True happiness is in simplicity! In simplicity is happiness."

Some Englishmen were offended by his frank opinions. How could this young man from one of their colonies dare to preach to them about the needs of their country? But there were many God-fearing souls who were more than pleased to hear him. Their hearts had been stirred by his thought-provoking speech. Many in this audience were learned and intellectual.

Prof. Vaswani gave a couple of lectures in York on: "India and Christianity". At the close of one of his lectures an Englishman exclaimed: "I wish I were an Indian! What a privilege it is to be born in India!"

In Bristol, Prof. Vaswani stayed as a guest of Sibree, Professor of Oriental Languages in Bristol University. Prof. Sibree was a learned man and was a lover of the East and her ancient wisdom.

Here, Prof. Vaswani also met Dr. Carpenter, Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford. Dr. Carpenter showed Prof. Vaswani the sacred *samadhi* of Raja Ram Mohun Roy, which was a few miles outside Bristol. Prof. Vaswani was only too glad to be granted the opportunity to pay his heart's homage to this great son of India whom he called the 'Hero-Soul!'

When he was asked to write a few words in the Visitors' Book he sat in quiet for a moment and then wrote these touching lines:

"Raja Ram Mohun Roy is lonely.
His message unto you, my countrymen, is:

'Unite and build!"

Born in Bengal in 1774, Raja Ram Mohun Roy passed away in 1833 at Bristol. He had devoted his life to the eradication of the evil customs prevalent in India in those days. He waged wars, amongst others, against child-marriage, the caste-system and the *sati*.

Belonging to an orthodox Brahmin family, Ram Mohun had studied Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, English and a few other European languages. He was known as an intellectual and a distinguished scholar.

Ram Mohun Roy was married at the early age of eight; his child-bride died within a year.

He was only sixteen when he wrote against idol-worship and thus offended his father. Consequently, he had to leave home.

In 1811, he was horrified when the widow of his brother ascended the funeral pyre. The widow made an attempt to escape as soon as she felt the scorching flames all over her body. She shrieked aloud, but to no avail. As was the custom then, drums were beaten aloud by relatives and friends to drown the frantic cries of the innocent victim and she was pinned down to the burning pyre by means of bamboo poles. Ram Mohun's heart was filled with such pity and remorse that he took a vow to abolish the inhuman practice of *sati*.

His fame as a valiant fighter against evil customs prevalent in the Hindu society in those days had spread far and wide. Even in England, a number of people from all walks of life began to admire him for his courage. Therefore, when he went there in 1830 he was treated with profound respect and intense admiration. Wherever he went in England visitors thronged to his residence at all hours of day and night. The strain of meeting so many people soon told upon his health and doctors stopped visitors from calling on him.

In England, he pleaded in person in favour of the repeal of *sati*. His efforts soon bore fruit and he had the satisfaction of being present in the House of Commons when the Act abolishing this cruel custom was passed.

Years later, Vaswaniji wrote a poem on Ram

Mohun Roy in which he referred to his visit to the sacred *samadhi*. The poem begins with the soul-stirring stanza:

I crossed the seas: I saw thy face,
O Builder of a Nation new,
Who still the sword of spirit drew:
O hero of an ancient Race!

Prof. Vaswani had read as well as heard about George Muller who had done selfless service in a spirit of faith. During the course of his stay in Bristol he visited Muller's Home for Orphans.

George Muller had founded several orphanages in Bristol. He had hardly any financial resources of his own. Nonetheless, he carried on this work of mercy in the fervent faith that God, whose coffers are always full, provides necessary funds for all worthwhile causes.

George Muller found several orphans in Bristol. His heart went out to them and out of compassion he founded an orphanage for these parentless children in the faith that God, who is the Father of all, would provide for these unfortunate children.

He did not have any wealthy friends when he started the first orphanage. His name was practically unknown in those days. He embarked upon the enterprise 'with faith within and God overhead!'

When in 1830, George Muller resigned from his job as a pastor to start orphanages, he was getting a stipend of 50 pounds per annum. Later, his income from love-offerings rose to £2,600 a year, equal almost to £5000 a year today, most of which he gave away to the work of the Lord. During his life-time, he received love-offerings worth £ 1.38 million pounds. (One million three hundred and eighty thousand pounds sterling.)

George Muller never appealed for funds and never approached anyone for financial help. When in need of money, he knocked at the door of God and prayed to Him on high in a spirit of faith without any doubt.

Invariably everytime, God provided all the funds necessary through moving the hearts of some of His people to give and they brought to George Muller just the amounts he had prayed for.

In Bristol, Prof. Vaswani gave several speeches on India and her mission in the modern world. His audiences included several distinguished people, many of whom participated in the question and answer sessions that follow speeches. Some people even would affectionately invite him to their homes.

A woman, who lived in Bristol and was the sister of the Commissioner of Sind of those days, was so greatly impressed by Prof. Vaswani that she invited him to stay in her house as her guest. Subsequently, she wrote to her brother in Karachi requesting him to be of help to Prof. Vaswani.

On his return to India, Prof. Vaswani received a letter from the Commissioner expressing a desire to meet him. He said to Prof. Vaswani that he had heard much about him and he wanted to please him. The Commissioner expressed a desire to give Prof. Vaswani land or money or title from the Government. Prof. Vaswani, as usual, smiled and declined the offer.

The Commissioner then offered to appoint him as the Census Commissioner of Sind. "I do not know anything about census operation," Prof. Vaswani gently replied. The Commissioner had never come across a man who could spurn lucrative and tempting offers. When the Commissioner realised that Prof. Vaswani was an unselfish worker, he felt attached to Vaswaniji and their friendship lasted for as long as the Commissioner was stationed in Sind.

The trip to attend the Welt Congress of Religions gave Prof. Vaswani the time and the opportunity to contemplate and commune with the Eternal much more than he could do during his college life in Karachi. He was happy to play a part in spreading the message of India in the European countries. He was grateful for being once again in the company of his gurudev. He had made many friends and well-wishers in the West. Truly, this sojourn renewed his spirits in every way.

Prasnotra

Several questions were put to Prof. Vaswani at the close of his lectures during his sojourn in Europe, which he readily answered.

At one place he was a guest of the Theosophical Society. The Society organised several meetings which were addressed by him. An idea of the type of questions put to him and his answers to them is given below:

Q. It is difficult to lead a spiritual life. Living in the world what are we to do to receive spiritual light?

A. We are dominated by desires. We must free ourselves from desires. We must rise above desires. He who succumbs to desire invites pain. Desire, *trishna*, is the source of world sorrow. The lotus blooms in water but is untainted and unsullied by it. Drops of water rest upon its petals only to enhance the beauty of the lotus. Even so he, who keeps his heart pure, and is free from desires, blooms in beauty as the lotus. Sorrow, like drops of water, disappears. Such a one then may be pure and perfect, rich and radiant.

Q: What is faith? How may we grow in the spirit of faith? We often feel depressed, perplexed and sorrow-smitten.

A. Faith, not unoften, comes only to disappear. Faith is assailed by doubt. In moments of trials and tribulations faith receives a rude shaking.

Q. What are we to do in such moments?

A. May I remind you of the story of Moses, a man of God? This story teaches us to have implicit faith in God. True faith bids us to knock at God's door and not stand as beggars at the doors of human beings. Be firm in your faith despite all difficulties and dangers.

At another place it went as follows:—

Q. What do you wish to become? What is your ideal in life?

A. I desire to become a moth.

Q. Why do you wish to become a moth?

A. I fain would become a moth for the moth longs to be consumed in flames. I crave that my ego be consumed, burnt up and reduced to naught and my life be filled with His Mercy and His Grace and His Name.

Q. What path would you have us tread?

A. The true path is not of "greatness". Be ye little, be ye humble as a blade of grass that neither grumbles nor groans when it is trampled upon. Be ye humble as dust.

At a huge Sunday meeting in England, the following questions were put to him:—

Q. Is the name of Sri Krishna well-known in your land? Does Sri Krishna influence the lives of the people of India?

A. Millions of my countrymen have been influenced by Sri Krishna and the Gita.

Q. Does the inspiration of Sri Krishna's life flow in the lives of Muslims too?

A. I feel that Sri Krishna has swayed the hearts of some Muslim poets, writers and thinkers.

Q. Would you substantiate your statements by giving names of some Muslim poets who have felt the fascination of Sri Krishna?

A. I come from Sindhu Desa which has given birth to many a Muslim dervish, fakir and poet. I recall the name of a poet of Muslim faith upon whom Sri Krishna exercised a wonderful influence.

Q. Who is he ?

A. His name is Beydil.

Q. What does Beydil mean?

A. Beydil means one who has lost his heart. There have been several other poets, too, who have lost their hearts to Sri Krishna, whose hearts have been merged in Sri Krishna and His teachings. The heart of the poet Beydil was lost in the vision of Sri Krishna. It was consumed in the glory of Sri Krishna. Beydil wrote in rapturous terms: "One is the Wonder and One is the Mystery." He meditated upon this Wonder and his heart was lost in it and he became Beydil—without a heart. He lost his heart in the Mystery, and Love awoke within his heart.

When love for a person awakens in our heart we lose ourselves, we merge ourselves in him. This is the secret of true love. The heart of Beydil dervish was lost in the Speechless Wonder, in the Wonder of wonders.

A Muslim lady also has been greatly influenced by the teachings of Sri Krishna. Her name was Taj. "Taj" means "crown". God had placed upon her head the crown of life. Crowns of worldly kings have tumbled down, but the crown of Taj still exists. Therefore does Taj, who is a devotee of Sri Krishna, still continue to draw towards Him countless hearts. Taj realised that Sri Krishna was the Supreme Treasure of life, the Treasure of treasures.

Taj was born in a noble Muslim family in Mathura in the period when Muslims ruled over India. Love for Sri Krishna all of a sudden sprang in her heart. She felt so captivated by Sri Krishna that she prayed to Him to accept her at His Lotus-feet.

In the days of Taj, Vithal Goswami was famous as a Krishna-Bhakta. Taj sought him and in a voice choked with tears said: "Henceforth I belong to Sri

Krishna. Kindly initiate me and be good enough to grant me a mantra."

The earnestness of the plea of this Muslim girl and the sincerity of her tone appealed to the Goswami and he at once gave her the mantra :

Hare Ram, Hare Ram, Ram Ram Hare Hare,
Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna
Hare Hare.

Taj left the Goswami's place completely transformed. Seeing her worshipping Sri Krishna, people of her community began to speak ill of her, maligned her and slandered her. Taj, however, who belonged to Sri Krishna, remained in a world of her own, indifferent to blame and censure, to slander and pain.

Taj, an inspired singer, has sung a number of songs in praise of Sri Krishna, in love and longing for Him. In one of her songs she declares: "Krishna, the Lord, is mine!"

Homeward Bound

Prof. Vaswani was overwhelmed by the love people gave him during his six months stay in Europe. He was touched especially by the devotion of the women of the West. Whenever he stayed as a guest with a family the women of the house sought to serve him and to make his stay comfortable.

When he had spent six months abroad, he received a letter from his mother asking him to return home. Taking this to be God's will, he made preparations for the return journey. His gurudev, however, wanted to stay abroad longer.

Prof. Vaswani did not have enough money for the return passage. But he was not in the least bothered. He, who had brought him all the way from India, surely would take him back. Ordinary people have faith in banks managed and financed by human beings. These banks often failed in those days making several depositors penniless. Prof. Vaswani believed in the Bank of God which never fails.

In those days the Maharani of Cooch Behar was visiting England. She had heard much about Prof. Vaswani and the favourable impression he had created in the West. She wished to be of some service to this patriotic son of India who had spread the message of their motherland far and wide. She invited him to tea. During the course of his conversation he told her of his intention to leave for India soon. As he was about to wish her goodbye, the Maharani said to him: "Won't you kindly do me a favour by granting me the privilege of purchasing your ticket?" Prof. Vaswani smiled serenely by way of consent.

He was not surprised to hear these words. Providence, he was sure, would provide for him in some way. This time it came in the form of the Maharani of Cooch Behar. The Maharani, for whom the price of the ticket was an insignificant amount, soon paid for the ticket.

Years later, Vaswani was put the question: "What makes your life beautiful?" He said:

> "I have a Friend. He protects me. He guards me in illness. He blesses me everyday. And He stretches forth His arms of Love to enfold me in the silence and darkness of night. He is your Friend, too. Indeed, he is the Friend of friends."

On the Continent, wherever Prof. Vaswani went, India was with him. Now that he was on board the ship bound for India, his motherland continued to be in his thoughts. He felt that his countrymen would receive him with unusual warmth, for he must have risen in their esteem. They would greet him and meet him with greater respect than before, as newspapers from England, containing glowing accounts of him, had aready reached India. He was certain he would be asked to preside over several public meetings and functions and would be honoured in a hundred different ways in his country.

On board the ship Prof. Vaswani felt that he might grow vain because of the honours that would be showered upon him and the fame that would be his. He thought that he must pay some price for the priceless gift of humility he aspired to attain. So he resolved not to preside over any meeting for a period of at least one year. By that time the people, who are short of memory, surely would forget about the name and the fame that his trip to Europe had given him.

"Why is the ocean the king of all rivers and streams?" a disciple of Lao Tze, the Chinese sage, asked the master.

"Because it is lower than all of them," the Master replied; and Prof. Vaswani sought to be the lowliest of the low.

However, it was not enough he should refrain from presiding over any meeting for a period of a year. He thought that he must do something more, he must go a step further if he wished to attain the grace of humility and thus live in the continual presence of God. God guided him one evening in the step he should take. He was moving to and fro on the deck as the ship pierced the waters and moved ahead. The "Voice from within" prompted him to fling into the water the bundle of newspaper and journal clippings that he had accumulated. These contained his articles and the reports of the lectures that he had given on the Continent along with the glowing accounts about him.

As soon as Prof. Vaswani heard this "Voice", he returned to his cabin, brought out the clippage and threw it in the watery grave. Was it not King Solomon, who had once sighed as he had said to himself: "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

The ship landed at Bombay. From there, Prof. Vaswani went immediately to Hyderabad (Sind) to meet his mother and other members of his family.

Varandevi, his mother, had not yet reconciled herself to the idea of her son remaining a celibate. She humourously remarked: "Son, it is a joy to have you back. But tell me frankly, did no European girl appeal to you? Would you not care to be married to someone?"

Vaswani seriously replied: "Mother! By the blessings of Guru Nanak Dev I have not been tempted by the onslaughts of the fair sex. I fain would become a labourer in God's vineyard.

I crave to become a *fakir* and move about spreading the message of my Master!"

The smile from Varandevi's face faded and her eyes were filled with tears. Nevertheless, she managed to say: "Son, withdraw your words. You are a Sahib and you must remain a Sahib. Forget not the promise you have made to me." She could control herself no longer and burst into sobs. Tenderly wiping his mother's tears, Prof. Vaswani assured her that he would not become a fakir during her life-time, despite the craving of his heart.

'Sahib' in ordinary sense of the term means a superior. This word also means one with a white complexion, a European. But Sahib has another meaning also. It is a term of respect suffixed to the names of God, for it means the "Lord."

If Prof. Vaswani was a Sahib in the ordinary sense of the term, he was a Sahib in the spiritual sense also, for at heart he was a man of God, of renunciation and devotion. His mother would at last realise this. Before she would depart from this world she would rejoice in the thought that her son was far, far above ordinary worldly sahibs.

Prof. Vaswani soon left for Karachi to resume his work at the D.J. Sind College. The citizens of Karachi as well as the faculty and students of the College received him with unusual warmth. They met him with all the affection they were capable of and held him in higher esteem and had for him greater respect than before. They were, however, surprised to note that there was not the slightest change in him. He had been unaffected by admiration and adulation.

Before Prof. Vaswani had left for Germany many students had felt drawn towards him. On his return from the Continent, many more students were deeply impressed by his life and living and endeavoured to follow him on the path of spiritual life.

"Give me a fulcrum," said Archimedes, "and with a lever I will move the world." The scientist was asking for the impossible. But in a way this is just what saints have been doing. God himself is the Fulcrum while prayer is the Lever. Prayer kindles the fire of love. It is with this lever of prayer that saints have moved human beings towards a nobler life.

For most of the people, nevertheless, prayer consists of the muttering of mere words or incantation of some mantras, the meaning of which is Greek to them.

Once, a student aspiring to lead a spiritual life, asked Prof. Vaswani: "Won't you kindly tell us a little prayer which we may offer everyday?" And he said: "Let me pass on to you the prayer which I love to repeat everyday, the ancient prayer the Rishi of the Upanishad uttered:

Asato ma sad gamaya!
Tamaso ma jyotir gamaya!
Mrityor ma amritam gamaya!

Lead me from the unreal into the Real !
Lead me through darkness into Light !
Through death lead me into Immortality !

"Life is meant to radiate light," he explained. "The piteous need of humanity is 'light, more light'!" And he continued: "Let the light of love fill your heart,–love for all races, all nations, all men, all creatures, all forms of cosmic life. And filled with light your heart will be a love-hymn of thanks-giving to the All-love. Your life will be a singing altar."

Where is My Home?

It was the summer of the year 1912. On account of the scorching heat, Sri Promotholal Sen had left Calcutta for the cool and refreshing climate of Simla. Prof. Vaswani went from Karachi to Simla to be close to his gurudev.

While in Simla, Prof. Vaswani delivered a series of lectures. After his lectures abroad, his fame had spread all over the country. His speeches were scholarly as well as touching. His audience included students, professors, officials and others. Indians and foreigners alike attended his lectures.

One lecture in Simla was attended by some members of the Governing Board of Dyal Sing College. The authorities were in search of a person to be the Principal of this College. They were on the look-out for a man of profound scholarship and exemplary character. When they heard Prof. Vaswani's speech, they felt he was just the one they needed for their college. In him they found a happy blend of both. He was a young man of learning and light. A man of his type and temperament, of his culture and character was needed to mould the lives of the pupils. They requested him to become the Principal of the College.

"We are sure the character of college students will be shaped aright under your able guidance," they told him. "We therefore invite you to be the Principal of our College."

Prof. Vaswani was then in his early thirties. He felt that he was too young to be at the helm of such a big and well-known college. The post of the Principal entailed numerous administrative responsibilities. He frankly expressed his doubts to the members of the Governing Board of the College, and asked them to give careful consideration to the matter. If they were still of the view that they would like to have him as the Principal, they could communicate their decision to him at Hyderabad, his native place, where he intended to go.

Soon after, the Governing Board of the College sent him a telegram at Hyderabad offering him the Principalship of the College.

Thus destiny once again snatched Prof. Vaswani from Sind. This time it took him to the province of the Punjab, hallowed by the sacred presence of the great Sikh Gurus. Perhaps, God wanted him to live on the soil of the Punjab to understand better the lives and teachings of the great Gurus. Vaswaniji later became a powerful instrument in interpreting the wonderful teachings of these great Sikh Teachers and in spreading the message of these heroes and martyrs.

Prof. Vaswani did not go alone to Lahore. One of the Karachi ashramites, Tikam Jeswani, who had grown greatly attached to him, accompanied him. This youth left Karachi for Lahore and joined Dyal Sing College from where he acquired the Master of Arts degree. Jeswani returned to Sind in 1914.

Vaswaniji assumed charge of the College after having served as a Professor for eight years at Calcutta and Karachi. He occupied a responsible post at the early age of 33. He was perhaps the youngest Principal in India of an A-grade College and probably the most popular.

Principal Vaswani set on fire the hearts of his pupils by his inspiring speeches and learned lectures He spoke to them of leaders of youth movements and inspirers of humanity in different departments of human activities.

As soon as he rose to speak in the classroom or to lecture in the hall, a hush would fall upon the audience. His eyes had a wonderful glow in them as words flowed freely and spontaneously from his lips. There were times when the soft, flute-like voice, with which he commenced his speech, gradually gathered strength, till it charged as a roar of thunder at the close of his talk, while his whole body shook with emotion. The audience, too, would then be swayed with emotion. Verily, he was an orator of the first water.

He had ever so much to tell the young men and people of Lahore of their great Gurus, —of Guru Nanak Dev and his nine spiritual successors, of their heroic martyrdom and selfless service and sacrifice, and of their message contained in the Guru Granth Sahib. He was never tired of passing on to the eager minds the wonderful teachings of the sufis of Sind and rishis of ancient India.

The wonderful change Prin. Vaswani brought about in the atmosphere of the College exceeded the expectations of the authorities. They tried in every possible way to keep him happy as they considered it an extraordinary privilege to have him as the Principal of their College.

He was provided with various comforts and conveniences. He was allotted a huge bungalow for his residence. A number of peons were placed at his service. But Prin. Vaswani, who was filled with the spirit of *vairagya* (detachment), never felt attached to anything. He never forgot for a moment the teachings of his Beloved, Sri Krishna:

"Form and the Atman make you what you are:
A composite being.
Simplify yourself:
Realise within you that you are the Atman.
Your form is fleeting, transient. And all happiness

which you are building in forms,—in money, honour, human love is fleeting.
For all forms, happiness is a ray of the light that cometh only to depart:
From form to form you migrate in search of *sukha*, bliss, that you never have in things of the earth.
The *sukha* is in communion with the *Parama Purusha*."

Likewise, he saw his *sukha* in communion with the *Parama Purusha*. He joined in satsang every morn at the early hour of five. He would address these fellowship meetings in huge pandals erected for the purpose. As he spoke about the lives and teachings of the great Gurus, people from places distant and near came to listen to him. All types of people joined in the satsang,—the rich and the poor, the educated and illiterate, officials and the simple village-folk. The poor rustics would come from across the fields and farms. With their feet covered with dust, but with hearts full of faith for their Gurus, these simple village-folk came to hear about the message of their Masters.

They felt thrilled when they heard Prin. Vaswani speak about the Great Gurus. Once speaking of Guru Nanak, he said:

"What is the message of the Great One? What message does Guru Nanak take from place to place, to many lands,—to the cities and villages in and outside India? What message does he give to the people, to Hindus and Muslims he comes in contact with? 'Revere all Saints and Prophets,' he says. You and I need this teaching today. Have reverence for all saints and prophets. This is the great teaching of the Guru. He also teaches this:—Love God and Love the poor. Love, says the great Guru, is God Himself!"

Guru Nanak was the very picture of humility. The more Prin. Vaswani meditated upon his life, the more humble did he strive to be. He expressed humility through the words he spoke, through the deeds he did. Some of his acts of lowliness are simply unbelievable.

The Principal of such a well-known college would give leave to his peons, cooks, gardeners and watchmen on Sundays. "Go and enjoy life," he would say to them. But he would request them to come and have lunch with him. The first time he uttered these words they were taken aback. Whoever heard of such a thing in those days? Cooks, peons, gardeners and watchmen to get weekly holiday! And on top of it to be invited to have lunch with the *bara sahib*? Who would take the trouble of cooking meals if all of them were to be away? Their *bara sahib* sprang yet another surprise upon them when he said to them: "I have a request to make. Do not tell about this to anyone. Let it remain as a closely guarded secret between you and me!" Was this not humility, indeed?

Prin. Vaswani knew how to prepare a dish which may be likened to vegetable *biryani* of these days. He knew how to cook and prepare this fine dish. This man of literary tastes and refined temperament had trained himself to do the hard, prosaic work of cutting vegetables and cooking them. Was it not a beautiful way of showing his sympathy with those who toiled for him so hard? Was it not a gentle way of expressing his feeling of fellowship and brotherhood with those that were regarded as his servants?

Prin. Vaswani spent his Sunday mornings in reading journals and books that he received from abroad on Saturdays. He would sit for hours at a stretch in his room bolted from inside, absorbed in roaming in the field of literature. At about 12 noon, he would get up and go to the kitchen, where he would feel the presence of God.

At 1.00 noon sharp, his honoured guests, whom he regarded as pictures of his Master, would assemble in the dining hall. He and they would all sit on the floor and partake of the *brahma bhojan* prepared by his h hands and served by him not on China plates or metal dishes, but on fresh green plantain leaves available in his garden. He would also offer each a glass of water to drink. The guests at first felt very uneasy and uncomfortable in the presence of their master, but gradually got used to it. A saint may not be measured by ordinary tapes nor weighed in ordinary scales. Who were they to judge such a saintly soul by common standards meant for common people?

He also held prayer meetings on Sundays. The atmosphere of these meetings at his bungalow was so quiet and peaceful, that those present forgot their worldly worries and woes and felt the presence of God. If Prin. Vaswani himself communed with God, he made others aware of the Presence Divine.

His mother, Varandevi, and sister, Papur, came to Lahore to spend sometime with him. They were astonished to see his huge bungalow along with its retinue. It was almost unbelievable! The family had incurred financial loss after the birth of this second child. After years, the family again rolled in wealth on account of him. He had been true to his word, for he would literally place bags of gold at the feet of his mother.

Neither the mother nor the sister had ever lived before in such a huge bungalow. It was difficult for them to adjust themselves to the new style.

Prin. Vaswani was fond of sharing vegetables and fruits with the servants as the garden produced them in abundance. When the mother and sister found this out they were afraid he would share his salary also with them. So they managed to take all his salary the very day he got it. Prin. Vaswani had a wonderful spirit of tolerance. He smiled and emptied his pockets in their presence. So long as they chose to stay with him he handed over all his income to them just to keep them humoured.

There was one in the family who understood his ways and even encouraged him in his noble pursuits. That was his elder brother, Pahlajrai. When Pahlajrai came to spend his vacations with him, Prin. Vaswani felt more at ease to do as he pleased. Pahlarai himself was generous of heart and always sympathised with the poor and needy and served them to the best of his capabilities. Nevertheless, Pahlajrai was a practical man as the following account by Dr. N. N. Godbole Vaswaniji's colleague at the D. J. Sind College, Karachi, Professor of Science at the Dyal Sing College Lahore, and one of the builders of Banaras Hindu University, clearly reveals:-

Sadhu Vaswani at home had all the weakness of a worldly man. There was none in the house to work as house-keeper for him. He would send for postal stamps; in those days, there were small booklets for stamps of 1 anna, ½ an anna, etc. Once a booklet was purchased and a few stamps used out of it, the booklet would be lying somewhere in his drawer or on his table. When a fresh postal stamp was needed, a new book was sent for. His brother,—the late Sri Pahlajrai,—whenever he came to Lahore from Hyderabad-Sind, would collect stamps worth several rupees lying about on his table or in his desks. It was not uncommon to find Sri Vaswani losing his way, somewhere in a bye-lane near Anarkali or the Mall Road, and he would feel stranded till someone helped him out.

(From "Born to Serve")

Once Varandevi told Prin. Vaswani to send for a servant to tighten the tape of her cot as it had become loose. Prin. Vaswani at once began the job with his own hands which had always done the refined work of writing.

"What are you doing, son?" the mother said. "I asked you to send for a servant to tighten the *nawar*. You are a *Sahib* and you must not attend to such tasks."

"Mother, am I not your servant, too?" he humbly replied. "Permit me to be of service to you."

Varandevi was deeply touched by this act of love and humility on her son's part. Prin. Vaswani firmly believed in the oft-quoted saying: "Paradise lies at the feet of the mother."

During one of his mother's visits to Lahore, Prin. Vaswani happened to inquire from her if she needed anything. After some hesitation, Varandevi confided that she would like to eat palo-fish of Kotri. Kotri is a town in the vicinity of Hyderabad. Varandevi was in the habit of taking palo-fish which was a speciality of Kotri. This fish has a flavour of its own and the people of Sind relish it immensely.

Prin. Vaswani was placed in a very embarrasing situation. He did not like the idea of his mother being non-vegetarian. But to be asked to arrange to get palo-fish was something he had never expected! An obedient and dutiful son as he was, he wrote against his will, to a friend in Hyderabad to send him in Lahore a case of palo-fish of Kotri. Till the case arrived Prin. Vaswani prayed earnestly that his mother should give up taking fish.

Prin. Vaswani took the case to his mother as soon as it arrived. Varandevi was very pleased to see the case and praised her son for his kind consideration. She was glad her desire was about to be fulfilled. All joy, however, left her when the case was opened. She was distressed to see worms crawling inside the palo-fish. After all the trouble her son had taken in granting her wish, this was the result! Evidently, God did not wish her to eat palo-fish. She resolved not to eat it in future. A load was lifted off Prin. Vaswani's mind. He rejoiced in the thought that he would not be asked to commit such an act in future. Verily, God fulfills Himself in many ways!

If Prin. Vaswani was devoted to the Gita, he was fond of games too. He often joined his students in their games on the playground and played football, volley-ball and cricket with them. "Body-building is nation-building," he said.

Even while playing ordinary games, he often had extraordinary lessons to teach his students. The volley-ball at times fell and rolled on the ground and at times was caught by the students in their hands. "Even such is life," he would say to them. "You are at times raised in the eyes of people and they hold you in high esteem. There are times, however, when you fall in the esteem of people. Remain unaffected by the vicissitudes of life."

On one occasion he wanted to visit a temple in a neighbouring town and have darshan of the *Mahant* (priest) who stayed there. Some of his students expressed a desire to accompany him. He agreed on the condition that they would not reveal his identity.

The *Mahant Sahib* soon called them in his room. They found him seated on a *sandal* (raised wooden dais). He greeted them and inquired where they came from. Prin. Vaswani replied: "I belong to Sind." The word "Sind" was enough to make the Mahant lose temper. It served the purpose of a red rag to a bull.

"You belong to Sind!" the Mahant shouted in fury. "Sindhis delight in eating meat and flesh. Sindhis have not a spark of devotion in them." Prin. Vaswani heard these words patiently and merely said: "Maharaj! Bless us." The *Mahant*, who was out of mood by this time, thinking it a good riddance blurted out: "Go away!"

The party retreated in silence. As soon as the students came out of the gate, they burst out in laughter and mimicked the *Mahant*, repeating the words he had uttered and the tone in which he had spoken. The students also expressed surprise and wonderment at the treatment meted out to Prin. Vaswani. When the *chowkidar*, who was standing near the gate of the temple, heard what the students were saying among themselves, he felt that his master, the *Mahant*, had not known that Prin. Vaswani had paid him a visit. He at once went and apprised him of what he had heard.

Hearing that it was Prin. Vaswani and his group that had been unceremoniously sent away by him, he rushed out and caught up with the group. Holding Prin. Vaswani's hand in his, he apologised for hot words and took him inside the temple. The party of students followed. The treatment they received then presented a strong contrast. They were now treated like V. I. Ps.

As they were leaving the temple, on their way home, Prin. Vaswani said to the students: "Let this serve as an eye-opener to us all. In our daily dealings let us treat alike the poor and the rich, common men as well as those of name and fame, the deserving and also the undeserving. Beware of ill-treating anyone. Speak kindly and lovingly to one and all."

Once the students of Dyal Singh College invited prin. Vaswani to participate in the function of "Lal Loui," which means "Red Blanket" and may be eikened to a camp fire.

This Hindu festival of Lal Loui is celebrated all over India in the month of January, on the coldest night. The Lal Loui is celebrated with great enthusiasm and fanfare. Huge logs of wood are collected in a pit especially dugfor the occasion. A fire is lit and all sit around the fire and feel the warmth in the biting cold of the night. They sing songs, tell stories, relate spiritual experiences and thus spend the night in communion with each other.

Prin. Vaswani and his students sat round the fire, burnt log after log and kept themselves warm. Songs were sung and recitations were given from the *guruvani* (utterances of Sikh Gurus). The students asked the Principal to speak to them a few words concerning "Lal Loui". Every celebration and every ceremony had a special significance for him. The students were, therefore, eager to hear him.

He said: "Winter is upon the world. How may we protect ourselves from the nipping cold of winter? Red fire and red heat alone can save us from this cold. Love is the red fire and love is the red heat. The power of love alone can protect us. If my heart be filled with love, would the poor be left to shiver in the cold of winter? This red fire is the symbol of love, pure and selfless. May you grow in the spirit of love and serve the needy and the distressed!"

Bright red flames of fire still kept rising in an effort to reach the skies while Prin. Vaswani had ceased to speak. But the college students treasured in their hearts his words which had in them the warmth of the red flames.

Prin. Vaswani once went to Amritsar, Hardwar and Brindaban, places of pilgrimage, close to Lahore. He set out with high hopes. He expected to find there an atmosphere of sanctity. He was deeply disappointed to find mammon instead of God being worshipped in the tesmples. And the cry roes from the innermost rceeses of his heart: "Where, O where may I seek Thy true devotees, O Lord! Whither may I find true pilgrim-spots?"

Once as Prin. Vaswani went out for his usual morning walk in winter, he found in a garden a fakir, seated underneath a tree, exposed to the penetrating cold that makes the very bones shiver. But even at the early hour the fakir looked composed and serene.

Prin. Vaswani felt drawn towards this fakir. He bowed to him and sought his blessings. The fakir asked him to be seated. Then the fakir got up from his seat and fondly embraced him and his heart heaved with joy. He was so deeply touched by this act of tender love on the part of the fakir that his eyes were touched with unbidden tears.

The fakir lifted his eyes and said to Prin. Vaswani: "Rich is the treasure of your tears. Gather this treasure and preserve it. It is a spiritual treasure. Indeed, this treasure will one day lead you to the Yonder Shore!"

On another wintry morning, Prin. Vaswani was out for a walk. In winter, Lahore experiences biting cold. In those days Prin. Vaswani used to take long walks. On this day, he walked in the piercing cold of Lahore, till he felt such fatigue that he could walk no more. He rested for sometime under a tree and then thought of returning home. But he could not recollect his way back home and wondered which path to take.

He was so greatly absorbed in his thoughts that he lost all consciousness of his surroundings. Like a semi-intoxicated man, he found himself in the world and yet out of it. In this state of consciousness he kept asking himself repeatedly: "Where, O where, is my home?"

He met several people on the way and accosted them with this query: "Where is my home?"

They laughed at him and even ridiculed him by retorting: "It is for you to tell us about your dwelling place. How are we to know where you live ? " " I live in a locality where stands a spacious garden. I often play games in this garden," he said by way of throwing some light. And once again he put the question: "Where is my home?"

" From what you tell us it is difficult to make out where your house is," the people remarked.

By then he had got so exhausted that he went to sleep under a tree. When he got up, he felt refreshed. Again he set out on his strange quest, till he reached a garden. It was the hour of eve when he entered it and found several people there. Once again he put to them the question: "Can you tell me where my home is? Can you guide me to my home?"

They inquired about his name. At the word "Vaswani" they remarked in delight: "We have heard much about you. We know where you live. Come, we will take you home!"

Prin. Vaswani heaved a sigh of relief as he accompanied them. On his way home, his thoughts turned to a sloka of the Gita in which Sri Krishna says to Arjuna: "*Mamekam Sharnam* : Come unto Me! Seek refuge in Me for your abode lies at My feet!"

The Fetters Fall

St. Kabir sings: "If you feel not love's longing for your Beloved One, it is vain to adorn your body, vain to put unguent on your lips."

Prin. Vaswani, who ever felt this love's longing for his Beloved One, thought that it was vain to acquire fame and name, to enjoy honour and earn wealth. How longer still must he wait for his fetters to fall so that he could dedicate himself solely to Love Divine and dive deep into the Ocean of sweetness?

Despite his inner urge, Prin. Vaswani attended to his secular duties and discharged them faithfully. Saints grow in the virtue of patience in the measure in which they are denied opportunities to become one with their Beloved. The deep inner craving of the soul makes them bide their time. Outwardly, they fulfill their worldly tasks, while inwardly they wait on God. Simone Weil, the German authoress of the book entitled "Waiting on God", says that it is this waiting and watching that really matters in life.

Not a star appears in the heavens on high without His will. Not a cloud sheds rain without His command. And it was ordained by the Will Divine that Vaswaniji continue to serve as Principal for sometime longer.

The city of Lahore had benefitted much from Prin. Vaswani. There were still two more places in Northern India where destiny was to lead him.

Had not Prin. Vaswani given a word to his mother that he would place bags of gold at her feet? The son must thrive financially to be true to his word. God's guiding hand accordingly took him from Lahore to Cooch Behar and thence to Patiala, where his financial prospects were to improve considerably.

In 1915, Brajendra Nath Seal, who was the Principal of Victoria College, Cooch Behar, was appointed as the Vice-Chancellor of the Mysore University, and destiny took Prin. Vaswani to Cooch Behar, where he took charge of Victoria College as Principal.

Prin. Vaswani was highly successful at the Victoria College. The students and the staff developed the utmost reverence for him. Their new Principal was not only learned and competent, but a holy being also, saturated with love for God. And at times a feeling of awe crept over them in his presence, even though he talked affectionately with one and all and played games with them on the college grounds.

Reports of his saintliness reached the Maharaja of Cooch Behar. He invited him to his palace.

Prin. Vaswani, who was fond of long walks and was not conversant with the customs and traditions of royalty, went to the palace on foot. It was customary for visitors to go to the palace in a horse-carriage in a dignified manner. So when the *durban* found Prin. Vaswani coming on foot, he took him to be an intruder. When Prin. Vaswani informed the *durban* that he had an appointment with the Maharaja, the *durban* felt that Prin. Vaswani was just giving him a a fib to gain admission to the palace. He, therefore, refused him admission to the palace.

Prin. Vaswani was as ever quiet, patient and meek. The "saint" in him always rose to the occasion and made him swallow the bitter pill without any retaliation on his part. He retraced his steps without even a word of protest.

The Maharaja had instructed his secretary to receive Prin. Vaswani and bring him to his chamber. The secretary was a little late and reached the gate as Prin. Vaswani was leaving. He immediately rushed to greet him, apologised for being late and led him inside the palace.

The Principal and the Maharaja spent sometime together and, as he took leave of him, he thanked the Maharaja for having spared his precious time. But the Maharaja said: "Mine is the greater privilege."

While Prin. Vaswani was with the Maharaja, the *durban* was feeling restless. He felt that he would be taken to task and would surely lose his job, should the guest tell the Maharaja about the treatment meted out to him. He heaved a sigh of relief when he saw the secretary leading the guest towards the gate. Prin. Vaswani left the palace grounds, leaving behind a wondering *durban*.

While he was Principal of Dyal Sing College, Lahore, Prin. Vaswani's name had become a household word throughout the Punjab, especially so because of his expositions of the message of the Gurus. Men and women from far and near would come and listen to these expositions.

The Maharaja of Patiala, who was a great Sikh devotee, had heard much of Prin. Vaswani. So, when Edmund Cahler of Mahendra College, Patiala, retired, he invited Vaswaniji to become the Principal of the College. Prin. Vaswani, who saw the hand of God in every turn of events that occured in his life, consented. He had barely served as Principal of Victoria College for one year; but taking it to be God's will, he accepted the invitation and moved on to Patiala. Evidently, Prin. Vaswani was not destined to stay at one place for long. The whole of Northern India was to profit by his spiritual gifts and worldly talents.

At Patiala, Prin. Vaswani was allotted a spacious bungalow with a garden attached to it. Every morning and evening he would go out for a walk. A few days later, he got a feeling that he was being followed by someone during his walks. He looked behind and was surprised to find a familiar face. It was his own *chaprasi* following him.

Prin. Vaswani was fond of taking solitary walks. He at once asked the chaprasi to leave him alone. The *chaprasi* timidly said: "Sire, I have instructions not to leave you alone. I have been appointed for the purpose of being at your service and not leaving you alone."

"Who has instructed you thus?" inquired Prin. Vaswani.

"The Maharaja Sahib, Sire!" the *chaprasi* replied. "You are new to this place. And you venture out alone into woods, where it is not safe to be alone."

So long as Prin. Vaswani remained in the service of the Maharaja, the Maharaja's instructions, given with the best of motives, were binding upon him. But were not all these instructions ties for him from which he longed to be free? "When will I achieve freedom and serve God, the Maharaja of maharajas?" he asked himself.

Yet another invitation came to him from the Banaras Hindu University. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the founder of the University, wishing to avail of his talents, invited him to become a member of the staff. He did not get the urge to leave Patiala and so he declined. Was it because of the promptings of the inner feeling that freedom seemed to be in wait for him?

The management of Mahendra College was extremely kind to him. Even though the budget he proposed was of enormous amount, it was sanctioned without any question. Money was no consideration to the Maharaja, who wanted the College to run along the right lines. Prin. Vaswani was given full freedom and free field to execute his plans and carry out his proposals.

The Maharaja of Patiala once requested Prin. Vaswani to go to a nearby town for some work. On his return he was asked to send the T. A. bill. Prin. Vaswani submitted a bill of Rs. 60/-, being the actual amount spent by him. He was told that it was beneath the dignity of the Maharaja to sanction such an insignificant amount. He was actually paid a thousand rupees instead of the paltry figure of Rs. 60/-.

This incident makes one think of the Mahan Raja, the Supreme Raja, whose coffers never grow empty and whose treasures are ever flowing. What would He not give us if we served Him with sincerity? His grace is far more precious than the coins of the Maharajas.

In the course of his talks with the Maharaja, Prin. Vaswani once mentioned that he did not have a proper library for his personal use. The Maharaja at once sanctioned an exorbitant amount for the private library of the Principal.

"I had only to give a suggestion, to pass on a word. Rest assured that things got done in no time," Prin. Vaswani said later, reminiscing about those days. The Maharaja realised his worth and saw to it that his proposals were sanctioned without delay.

The Maharaja always invited Prin. Vaswani to his parties where non-vegetarian food and intoxicating drinks were served. As Prin. Vaswani was a strict vegetarian, the Maharaja ordered that vegetarian dishes and soft drinks be placed before him. The Maharaja insisted upon Prin. Vaswani's presence and the usual rules were waived in his case.

Prin. Vaswani's elder brother, Pahlajrai, had by this time settled down in Karachi. He was placed in-charge of all the Municipal Schools. The city of Karachi had flourished and the population had increased considerably. The Municipality was running several Primary Schools for Hindu and Muslim boys and girls.

The year 1918 seems to be an eventful one in Prin. Vaswani's life. It was in this year that Pahlajrai was blessed with a son named Jashan, whose life later became intimately bound up with his own. This child ultimately took over his spiritual mission. When Prin. Vaswani first saw this child he blessed him abundantly. He was very happy that a son had been born in the family.

Pahlajrai already had a son named Bulo by his first wife, Jamunadevi, a woman of noble traits. She shared with her mother-in-law, Varandevi, the life of hardship when Vaswaniji was receiving college education. Her only son, Bulo, was mentally deranged by birth. As such he could not discharge the duties binding upon a son.

Though abnormal, Bulo would at times utter words which would prove to be prophetic. Did Bulo speak from inspiration? Or was he an evolved soul that had been born in the gifted Vaswani family to work out his past *karma*?

Bulo was never sent to a mental hospital. He lived with his father and Krishnadevi. In 1918, when Varandevi breathed her last, Papur took Bulo with herself to Hyderabad where both lived together. Papur served Bulo with love till he passed away in Hyderabad-Sind in the early forties.

In 1918, plague broke out in Hyderabad taking a heavy toll of human lives. Varandevi, too, fell a victim. She was brought to Karachi for medical treatment. When Prin. Vaswani received a telegram informing him of his mother's illness, he immediately left for Karachi to look after his ailing mother. He sat by her bedside, night after night, and attended to her needs.

Varandevi lived in daily dread for she had a great horror of plague. She was afraid it had reached an advanced stage and she would soon have to make her exit from the world.

Prin. Vaswani knew full well that his mother did not have long to live. He was, however, anxious that her end should be peaceful, that when the final curtain fell, there should be not a shadow of fear. So he must do something to suggest to her that her disease had not far advanced.

One day from her sick bed, Varandevi asked for water to drink. A glass full of water was given to her. She found it difficult to consume all the water. Prin. Vaswani got the opportunity he had waited for. He drank the water left over in the glass. This was a daring act on his part as it was a sure way of catching the disease. The mother tried her best to snatch the glass from him, but he refused to hand over the glass.

"No, mother, let me drink this water," he pleaded. "If no harm comes to me, you will know that your disease is not so dreadful as you imagine it to be." Nothing happened to Prin. Vaswani by God's grace, but the mother's condition grew from bad to worse.

It was the third day of the sacred month of Vaisakha of the year 1918, when Varandevi passed away.

Before Varandevi breathed her last, Prin. Vaswani said to her: "Mother dear, I have wronged you and offended you on many an occasion. Above all, I have hurt your feelings by remaining a bachelor. Won't you forgive me before you leave this world?" Varandevi's eyes became moist as she blessed her son. "I die happy, my son, in the thought that you are a saint! I now realise that you have done well in not putting on yourself the shackles of marriage. You little know how happy and comfortable you have kept me. May you, my son, be abundantly blessed."

She then called to her bedside her only daughter, Papur, and placing her hand in that of Prin. Vaswani, said: "I entrust her to your care." Her other two sons also came to her room and sought her blessings before she left this world.

The mother, who had kept Prin. Vaswani tied to this world, was no more on this earth. The death of his mother had redeemed him of his promise not to renounce the world during her life-time. He was now free to do as he pleased. Determined not to delay a moment longer in fulfilling his heart's innermost desire to serve God and suffering humanity, he at once framed a well-worded telegram of resignation and despatched it to the Maharaja of Patiala.

"Know the Truth and the Truth shall make ye free," says Jesus Christ. Vaswaniji became true to Truth and achieved the long-sought-for freedom. Henceforth, he would have to depend entirely upon God. Henceforth, he would have to find his sole comfort and help in God alone.

The divine spirits must have been full of admiration for this idol of youths and must have cried aloud for him to hear: "Well done! Well done!" But not so most of his earthly friends who sought to dissuade him, for the values of this world are so different from those of the other world.

When his friends and admirers came to offer their condolences in person, they were stunned to find him clad in white khaddar clothes. He had stripped himself of all his silken garments, and had asked his younger brother, Manghan, to distribute them among the needy, for he had done away with them forever and would henceforth wear only coarse khaddar garments.

His friends and admirers were still more stunned to learn that he had resigned from the college. They ventured to say to him: "Why have you taken such a hasty and hazardous step in giving up your fine job? You are yet young, barely forty. A bright and glorious future awaits you,—a future of fame and fortune." But he had realised, as the great Italian leader, Garibaldi, had done, that life was a mission, and was not meant to earn money and fame.

Vaswaniji said to them: "The purpose of life is to dedicate it to Love Divine, to serve and to be poured out as sacrifice!"

The Maharaja of Patiala was equally stunned to receive Prin. Vaswani's resignation by telegram. He requested Vaswaniji to pay a visit to Patiala to receive the honours due to him. No employee, who has won the respect of the Maharaja, may leave without receiving lavish gifts from him, without joining in the farewell party held in his honour. But Vaswaniji could not be persuaded to go to Patiala. He was now wedded to the Mahan Raja, to the Shahen Shah. So he asked to be excused.

The year 1918 thus marked the close of yet another chapter in Vaswaniji's life. This chapter had lasted for fourteen years. In this year began a fresh chapter in his life, a chapter on the pages of which are written in bold letters the words: Service and Sacrifice. Henceforth, Vaswaniji would move about the length and breadth of India clad in white home-spun khaddar garments. Henceforth, Vaswaniji would neither comb nor brush his curly hair. Henceforth, he would travel as a common man in the crowded and uncomfortable third class railway compartments. Henceforth, he would go about stirring the hearts of youths and inspiring in them love for simplicity, service and sacrifice. Henceforth, he would seek to fill the hearts of men and women, especially of youths, with love and devotion for the motherland. Henceforth, Vaswaniji would become the mouthpiece of God and the whole of India would reverberate with the sound of his voice! Henceforth, he would use his time and talents to the spreading of the message of prophets and saints of East and West. Henceforth, he would draw countless hearts to the Lotus-feet of the Lord and lead innumerable souls out of darkness into Light !

Creative Revolution

"Sacrificial men make History!" says Vaswaniji. Yes, it is these fortunate few that make history. And Vaswaniji now belonged to the group of these rare souls that are the immortals of history.

For nearly seven years had Vaswaniji served as Principal of three colleges. For nearly seven years had he remained in fetters, in shackles of servitude to be able to send to his mother 'heaps of money'. For nearly seven years had he lived in luxurious surroundings to maintain the prestige and dignity of office. But ease, comfort and luxury had far from sullied his spirit, which yearned to break asunder the bars of the golden cage and obtain freedom. As soon as the first opportunity offered itself, he broke through this golden cage and achieved the long–sought–for freedom.

Vaswaniji now went and stayed with his elder brother, Pahlajrai, in a flat in the crowded quarter of Garrikhata. Inspite of the drastic changes in his life-style, he felt happy and free, like a little bird happy with its perch on a tiny twig, free to commune with God and nature.

In Vaswaniji there was a rare blend of *gnana*, *bhakti* and *karma*. He firmly believed that work was also a form of worship, which when properly performed, led one Godward. He was not built in the mould of *sannyasins*, who renounce the world and retreat to far-off forests or repair to the tops of mountains. He wanted to be in the world and serve the world. Now that he had plenty of time at his disposal, he wanted to find some suitable work to occupy his time fruitfully. He was sure God would guide him in finding some suitable activity.

"Work on while it is day!" he once wrote in a message to a young man, "for the night cometh when no man may work."

Vaswaniji had several friends and admirers in Karachi. He had worked there as a professor in the D. J. Sind College for nearly six years and had influenced the lives of several students and citizens of Karachi, who had come in contact with him. A number of them, learning that Vaswani had come there, rallied around him. Gradually a small group was formed.

Tikamdas Jeswani, an energetic young man, was one of the group. He was the son of a banker. He had come under the influence of Vaswaniji as a student in the D. J. Sind College, Karachi. He became so greatly attached to Vaswaniji, that when the latter left the college to become the Principal of Dyal Sing College, Lahore, in the year 1912, he accompanied Vaswaniji to pursue his studies at Dyal Sing College. After completing his education, Tikamdas returned to Sind and settled in Karachi.

In 1914, Tikamdas courageously planned to start a newspaper, under the inspiration and guidance of Vaswaniji. The idea greatly appealed to Vaswaniji who had always regarded a newspaper as an essential instrument in shaping and moulding the lives and opinions of readers. He blessed the new venture and promised Tikamdas the utmost co-operation. Tikamdas requested Vaswaniji to suggest a suitable name for the newspaper.

In Vaswaniji's hour of meditation, rose before his eye of intuition the vision of the new times that were about to dawn. He visualised that the message of the new life would help in fulfilling the promise of the new times that stood at the threshold. He therefore suggested the name "New Times" in the hope that it would spread the message of the new life, which was an urgent need of the coming age. The "New Times", he felt, would serve as a useful organ for bringing about an awakening in the consciousness of the people of Sind.

The "New Times" was the first English daily newspaper to have been started in Sind by a Sindhi young man. The other newspapers belonged to Englishmen.

In 1918, when Vaswaniji resigned his job and moved to Karachi, Tikamdas' joy knew no bounds. Now that Vaswaniji was free, Tikamdas was certain that he would write for the "New Times". Articles, written by so great and gifted a writer and thinker as Vaswaniji, would certainly have a penetrating effect and would touch the hearts of the people. Vaswaniji had been blessed with the gift of new life. Like Gautama Buddha who had declared: "I will proclaim accordingly the way unto the farther shore!", Vaswaniji too felt that he must share this rare gift of new life with others. He did this by writing articles for the paper. He also composed poems which inspired the readers of the "New Times" to live the new life. One of his poems is being given here.

THE PATH

If thou tread the Path
Surrender worship of thyself,
And give thou up distraction, pride;
And weakness, passion, pride;
Thou art of God!

Then search the Self,
And be detached in love:
Look thou within,
And worship silently
The sacrificial Flame.

(From "Quest")

Vaswaniji fulfilled himself through his work. He read the proofs and performed other work connected with the operation of the newspaper. The gift of new life brings the gift of inexpressible joy. Vaswaniji's admirers were spread all over the world. They corresponded with him, seeking his opinion and advice on matters pertaining to the spirit. Vaswaniji's replies were always thought-provoking. These letters also were published in the "New Times".

Vaswaniji lived a simple and disciplined life, for had he not dedicated his life to God? He loved God and so woke up before dawn to sing the praises of God. In Pahlajrai's house, he arose daily at 4 a.m. to meditate and pray. The house rang with Vaswaniji's sweet voice, be it autumn or winter, spring or summer.

After breakfast, Vaswaniji would set out for the New Times Office located in Chopsy Building and spend the day there. Vaswaniji would read and write and attend to his voluminous correspondence there. His writings and letters still continue to be a source of inspiration to many people in India and abroad.

A room was set apart for prayer and meditation on the first floor of the Chopsy Building, where Vaswaniji would pass his spare time during the day.

Vaswaniji was fond of going out in the evenings for fresh air. The Clifton beach of Karachi is well-known. Old Clifton, which practically was deserted after the new Clifton was built, became Vaswaniji's favourite haunt. He would go there nearly every evening. At times, Pahlajrai and his children would accompany him. They would take long walks together in the quiet of old Clifton. Vaswaniji would often lose himself while gazing at the waves in the vast expanse of the Arabian sea.

Vaswaniji would return to Pahlajrai's house for dinner and night's rest. He slept on a wooden bed with just a sheet spread on it, without any mattress. Sleeping on a soft bed would mean living once again a life of ease and comfort. This would provide a hindrance in his way.

Now that Vaswaniji was free, several institutions and organisations in Karachi invited him to preside at their meetings and to address their gatherings. After his lectures there were question and answer sessions. He spoke from the heart,—emotionally inspired and intellectually incisive and shed light on many topics and eased the burdens of bewildered men.

Men, who longed to pursue spiritual life, sought his advice and guidance. He, who had love for God and love for neighbour, bade seekers to be mindful of the commands of God. Filled with this love, Vaswaniji greeted one and all with a smile, listened patiently, and bore with everyone humbly. After seeing him and talking with him, the sorrowful felt comforted, the impoverished and needy got financial aid, the weak of will went back strengthened, and those groping in the dark were enlightened.

In the year 1920, Mahatma Gandhi launched his Satyagraha movement. Vaswaniji felt that this new movement would spiritualise even the political life of India. He gave it his whole-hearted co-operation and promoted its cause through the columns of the "New Times".

Vaswaniji, whose heart was filled with love for the motherland, travelled out of Karachi to various parts of India. He went about propagating the message of Mahatma Gandhi. At times he lectured at four or five meetings a day. But he never seemed to grow tired by such a fast pace. His speeches took hold of the people; they were so fresh and original. His words, which had fire in them, inspired the youths of India to dedicate their lives to the motherland.

Vaswaniji's name was held in reverence by the people of Madras. Ganesh & Company, one of the leading Publishers of Madras, were especially impressed by his lectures and asked permission to print these in book form. Eventually, Ganesh & Company published forty books. He gave to those books stirring titles such as: India Arisen, Awake; Young India; India's Adventure; India in Chains; The Secret of Asia; My Motherland; Builders of Tomorrow; Apostles of Freedom. Thus Vaswaniji became in Sind the foremost interpreter, and in India one of the earliest advocates of the freedom movement.

A few of Vaswaniji's books were proscribed by the alien government in power in India.

At the Sind Political Conference it was Vaswaniji who moved the resolution on the policy and programme of non-cooperation. Though all the veteran political leaders were opposed to it, the resolution was passed.

Mahatma Gandhi and Vaswaniji met on several occasions and also addressed several meetings together. Gandhiji was so moved by Vaswaniji's writings that the lead article on the front page of the very first issue of the new series,– Vol. III of "Young India",–was by Vaswaniji.

The article "Philosophy of War" begins thus:

"Non-cooperation, it has been often urged, is a war, a bloodless war, a moral war against the Government. A true non-cooperationist must be a soldier of the moral ideal."

During the days of the non-cooperation, *hartals* were observed as a mark of protest against the British Government. Vaswaniji organised *hartals* in Karachi. Once the milkmen were asked to boycott Englishmen. This meant that even their children, too, would not get milk and most of the little ones take nothing but milk.

Why should the little ones be made to suffer for no fault of their own, questioned Vaswaniji. His heart always overflowed with the milk of human kindness. So he personally requested the milkmen to supply to the parents milk for children and not starve them. Here was a true non-cooperationist, a soldier of the moral ideal.

On one occasion when Gandhiji courted prison, included in Gandhiji's reading material were Vaswaniji's books. Vaswaniji recognised Gandhiji at a time when few amongst India's leaders appreciated him. He paid Gandhiji the following tribute when the latter visited Sind the year 1921:—

A MAN OF DESTINY

Dependence on personalities is undemocratic. And we live in an age of democracy. Yet democracy cannot succeed if it be not well led. The call of these days is for leadership. And leaders of the people are so few, in the world to-day,—leaders who combine character with clearness of vision, intellect with courage, force with frankness. Among such select few is he who is now touring in Sind.

Tears stood in mine eyes as I paid him my homage and bade him an affectionate adieu at the Rohri station this cloudy mystic morn: and I said to myself:—"Will political Sind listen to his voice?"

Mahatma Gandhi's cry is:—"Unite! Unite!" Unite in the service of *Swaraj*, the service of the poor!

India's patriots have passed on without seeing their dream of *Swaraj* come true.

Will Gandhi, too, pass on and the Dream remain unfulfilled? Or will he prove to be India's long awaited man of Destiny?

In the *tapasya* and courage of this hero-saint of Indian nationalism, I see the seed of India's freedom. To dare and to suffer is to conquer. Gandhi's name will be remembered, down through the centuries, after so many of the names of contemporary great men have been forgotten.

There are leaders who impress you with their intellectual capacity.

There are others whose secret is attractive personality. Others, again, who are forceful.

In Gandhi is a rare combination of the intellectual, the attractive, and the forceful.

He impresses with the strength of his practical idealism. He astonishes by the depth of his simplicity.

And his eyes are illumined with the light of a mystic who, in an age of scientific criticism, dares to believe in God and the Great Builder and Redeemer of the nations.

A new hope for the nation awakens in the heart on seeing this mighty transmitter of *shakti*. May we co-operate with it in humility and love and so help in the building again of an India worthy of ancient heritage! (From "Gandhi: The Man of Ages")

A bond of affection developed between the two great souls, Gandhiji and Vaswaniji. Both were in Carlyle's words "Supermen of history". Both were inspired by the same vision and were men of wisdom. Both were prophets of compassion and servants of the poor. Gandhiji said: "I recognise no God except the God that is found in the hearts of dumb millions," and Vaswaniji taught: "Service of the poor is the noblest worship of God." Both had immense love for the Gita. For Mahatma Gandhi, the Gita was a fountain of love and he called it "Mother Gita". To Vaswaniji, the Gita was a fountain of wisdom. Both stood emphatically for the spiritual ideal of life. Both were apostles of *ahimsa* and lovers of peace.

Vaswaniji, who came in close contact with Gandhi during the latter's visit to Sind, has described one such visit in the following words:—

THE WAY OF GANDHI

A few of us were with Mahatma Gandhi as he walked one day, along the bridge which leads from Rohri to Sukkur in Sind.

In answer to the question:—"What is the easiest way to God?" Gandhi said: "To me seva,—service of the poor,—opens the easiest way to God."

In one of his books Gandhi says: "I would rather be torn to pieces than disown my brothers and sisters in suffering and pain." He identified himself with the poor and needy, the broken ones, the indentured labourers, the untouchables,- with all those whom the world, intoxicated with power, tramples upon everyday.

Religion to Gandhi was not a creed but right life,—a life of sympathy and love, of fellowship with the poor.

One of the briefest speeches that Mahatma Gandhi gave was in Gurukul, Kangri, before a mammoth gathering. Vaswaniji had been invited to give the Convocation address in 1928. It was the first Convocation of the Gurukul University on the new site. As several leaders had come there, many public meetings were held. At one such meeting both Gandhiji and Vaswaniji were invited. There was a great hubub. No public address system existed in those days. Vaswaniji rose, simply saluted the people in silence by folding his hands and sat down.

Next, it was Gandhiji's turn and he started by saying that he, too, would have preferred to remain silent, as it was not possible for him to make himself heard in all the hubub. "But that would be imitating Vaswaniji. And I am not for imitation," he said and continued: "since speak I must, let me say this to you: '*Bharat Ka Sipahi Bano!*' (Be ye soldiers of India!)." After these brief but beautiful words, Gandhiji sat down accompanied by a thunderous applause from the audience.

Vaswaniji had the utmost reverence and profound regard for Mahatma Gandhi, whom he called the "Great-souled Gandhi". When Vaswaniji moved to Poona after the partition, he started the weekly Gita classes. Gandhiji was not living then, having been assassinated in 1948. In January 1952, Vaswaniji gave a series of talks on Mahatma Gandhi to the members of the Gita class. His inspiring and illuminating addresses, interpreting the message and mission of Mahatma Gandhi, have been published by Shri Gangaram in the book entitled: "Gandhi: The Man of the Ages".

Vaswaniji commenced the first of the series of talks thus:

Only a few words may I speak this evening. I propose to give a series of talks on Mahatma Gandhi. I feel it is time to speak of Gandhi to India and the nations. For he,—like the Buddha of the long ago,—was a prophet of compassion, an apostle of *lokasangraha*, a servant of the poor. Was he not, also, a *bhakta* of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna? The message of his life, I believe, is India's urgent need, the world's great need, today. For, today, the human race is facing a crisis perhaps, the greatest crisis in human history.

Today, there is unrest in the five continents. Today, chaos is spreading: and the world is threatened with a moral collapse. Some have asked me, again and again:— "You speak of a chaos spreading in India, in Asia, in other countries of the world. Is there no way to save the world?" And my answer to this question is:— "There is a way. The only thing that may save the world is a spiritual revolution."

Many years have passed since I wrote an article concerning the movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi. He called it the movement of non-cooperation. Interpreting in my article the spirit of the teaching of Gandhi, I spoke of the movement of non-cooperation as a "creative revolution". And I sent to the great leader a "cutting" of my article on "Creative Revolution", and requested him to let me know if I was right in interpreting the non-cooperation movement as a movement of creative revolution. And Gandhi, ever simple and in his simplicity sublime, Gandhi who never thought of himself as a great man but as a little one,—Gandhi wrote back to say that he agreed with me in thinking of his movement as a movement of creative revolution.

The New Gita

"Who are the leaders of India today?" was the question raised by an American student of Indian thought and culture. This very American answered the question thus: "In the West among the names known for spiritual life and teachings are Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and T. L. Vaswani. India is blessed with Vaswani who asks the youths of India to build a bridge of brotherhood between the East and the West."

This builder of the bridge of brotherhood between the East and the West had joined the "Satyagraha" movement started by Mahatma Gandhi in the hope that it would spiritualise the life of India. But he was disappointed to see that the actions of politicians and the activities of citizens were far from those inspired by Gandhiji's lofty ideals. Gandhiji was God's gift to India. Vaswaniji was disheartened to see that often India turned her back to the light which God had given her through Gandhiji.

Vaswaniji, therefore, turned his focus away from politics. Instead, he spread the message of Sri Krishna and the Gita, and the saints and prophets of the East and the West. This cause was inexpressibly dear to him. Each journey that he took was a quest for he had a deep hunger for Lord Krishna. He went to places sanctified by the presence of rishis and saints in the hope of feeling the living presence of the Beloved of his heart. He went to Bengal, the place of Vaishnava culture and visited the Santiniketan started by Rabindranath Tagore. He also went to Bihar. He visited Kurukshetra, where long ago, the historic battle was fought between Pandavas and Kauravas, where Sri Krishna had given the great Revelation enshrined in the Gita. He went to Hardwar,—the town regarded as a meeting place of saints and sages. He travelled to Brindaban, the place where child Krishna played his wondrous leela.

Five hundred years ago Guru Nanak had visited Brindaban and was disappointed to see crowds of men and women singing and dancing. He felt sad to see that Krishna's name was on their lips while darkness dwelt in their hearts.

A century ago Ramakrishna Paramahansa had cried wildly when he was in Brindaban: "Where is Krishna? Why cannot I see him? Everything here has been blessed by his presence,—but where is he?" And Vaswaniji's heart, too, bled within him when he moved through the groves of Brindaban and beheld the peacocks and deer, the trees and the hills and the blue waters of the sacred Jamuna river.

Vaswaniji also went to Banaras, Kashi, the place of piety and inspiration, of learning and scholarship. To Ayodhya, the birthplace of Sri Rama, did he proceed. He went to Gaya where stands the Vishnu Temple, where the Lotus-feet of the Lord are worshipped. The Bodhi Tree under which Gautama Buddha received illumination is also in Gaya. He went to the South as far as Cape Comorin but not yet was his quest over.

Vaswaniji has given vent to his feelings of intense agony and longing for Lord Krishna in several of his poems which are included in the booklet entitled: Quest. Each poem of his is even as a bird that sings to the flowers by day and to the stars at night and to human hearts day and night.

One of the poems is being given here:

Methinks the Ancient Flute
Still's singing, still is ringing—
Swiftly winning, softly winning
Gopi-souls in aspiration strong!
O listen to the music of the Lord!
Not of th' dead Past but of th' Ages is
The Eternal Krishna of the Flute!
In this world's cyclic life
He lives; for Love for ever lives,
And Love is ever young!

Vaswaniji visited places of pilgrimage in the hope that he would come across souls smitten with love and longing for the Lord and inspired with devotion for truth. But he felt disappointed to see the state of *pundits* who stayed there. The *Pandas* (Priests) were after money and not after God. They were arrogant and lacked humility. They were not men of realisation. He longed to meet souls who lived a hidden life in the Hidden One. He longed to have a band of selfless workers fired with the longing of the moth for the flame. He expressed this longing in the following words:—

"The moth seeketh destruction in the flame; so may I seek annihilation in the love of my Lord!"

Vaswaniji's lofty conception of a holy man is given in these words:

"The very sight of a Sadhu (holy man) purifies. From him come rays of purity, vibrations of *tapasya*, magnetic currents of love. They kill the evil germs around us and purify our moral atmosphere."

But the *pundits* Vaswaniji came across on the banks of the sacred Ganges and Jamuna rivers were so different. He spoke to them and during the course of his conversation he ventured to say to them:- "Seek Truth. Kindle the Light of Truth in your life."

He describes one of his strange experiences while on his visit to Hardwar thus:

"I went many years ago to Hardwar. I went there to have a dip in the Ganges. I saw a number of *pandas* (priests). They took three baths in Ganges everyday.

I asked one of them:—"Where is God?"

He said: "God is in the waters of the Ganges."

And I prepared to go, but he would not let me. I offered him a small coin. He asked for half a rupee. I was dumbfounded. I was disappointed.

And returning to my place I said to myself: "This *panda* has bathed in the waters of Ganges, yet remains, alas, unconverted."

And my lonely heart cried out: "In temples and in mosques I see Thee not, O Lord! Nor in those who travel far and wide and bathe in sacred river pools. Thou art in the Temple of the Heart."

The Khumbh Mela was being held at Hardwar when Vaswaniji visited there. Millions of people had gathered there on that sacred occasion. Almost everyone rushed to the river Ganga to take a dip in its holy waters. People experienced a feeling of purity and peace when they bathed in the sacred river.

Vaswaniji had heard much of the sacred Ganga and its pure and crystal clear waters. Alas, he found that the broad bosom of this river was being polluted by junk and the filth that was being dumped into it. He felt sad to see that men and women assembled there threw spittoons, filth and waste in the waters of Ganga, which exercised a purifying influence. Inspite of this abuse, waters of the Ganga appeared pure and clear.

Vaswaniji experienced a feeling of tranquility as he bathed in the cool exhilerating waters of the sacred Ganga. Like Swami Vivekananda, he, too, exclaimed: "Gange Maya! Gange Maya!" while bathing in the river.

Vaswaniji soon realised that neither the holy mantle nor the rosary, neither visits to temples nor to *melas* would unite him to God. It were better by far, he thought, to move about as a common man with his heart wedded to God, than to put on the ochre garb and be away from God. It were better by far to greet God on the dusty soil than be filled with the spirit of pride and arrogance and remain a recluse on Himalayan heights.

The strange experiences Vaswaniji got during his visits to temples and places of pilgrimage inspired him to change his conception of religion. To quote him:

"Religion is life, is fellowship, is mingling of the individual with the Great Life. And this is not shut up in the temples. This is moving in the market-place. The Great God is not somewhere in isolation. You will not find Him in temples of marble and stone. You will meet Him in the sweat and struggle of life, in the tears and tragedies of the poor. Not in the decorated temples, but in the broken cottages is the Great God,—wiping the tears of the poor and singing His new Gita for the new age!"

People have always thought highly of men of renunciation, of those who have withdrawn from the world, worn the ascetic's robe and gone and stayed on hill-tops. Vaswaniji, who always believed in being in the world but not of the world, never donned the ochre robe nor did he choose to remain aloof. This *karma-yogi*, who had heard the Great God sing His new Gita for the new age, had an amusing experience on one occasion.

He was once asked to address a huge gathering. A *sannyasin*, introducing Vaswaniji, said that the speaker of the evening was a great saint, a Maha Yogi. He waxed eloquent and declared that Vaswaniji lived on Himalayan heights and had descended to the plains to address them.

The *sannyasin* would have continued to speak in that vein had not Vaswaniji intervened and requested him to take his seat. Vaswaniji then spoke thus:

"Brothers and Sisters! I am neither a yogi nor a saint as my brother has just told you. Let me tell you that I have not come from the Himalayas. I belong to the province of Sind. I have come here in the spirit of a *yatri*, a pilgrim, to seek your blessing and to bring you a message about finding the fulfilment of your life in love. Religion is love. Therefore love one another, love the bird and the beast and every living creature. Give sympathy to all and help one and all. Let me repeat, I am not a saint nor a *sadhu*. But I aspire to be a servant of the *sadhus*, rishis and saints. Bless me."

At the close of the meeting Vaswaniji greeted the *sanniyasin* with his usual warmth. The *sannyasin*, who had been deeply shaken, asked: "Why did you contradict my statement? Such statements must be made to impress people." Vaswaniji answered: "Let us bear witness in our lives to Truth. Let us keep the Torch of Truth burning. Then alone may the Kingdom of God be glorified!"

Vaswaniji once went to Lahore to address a meeting. He stayed as guest in the house of a well-to-do businessman. Both his host and hostess were religious-minded and had intense devotion for God. It was winter when Vaswaniji was their guest. He was delighted to see that his host held fellowship meetings every morning. He was delighted to see that the sacred *havan-fire* was lit every morning at these meetings while his host recited passages from sacred scriptures.

Vaswaniji would go out for his early morning walks, clad in warm clothes. On his return, he would join in these fellowship meetings when bright, beautiful, blazing flames and sparks of fire would greet his eyes. He had a strong fascination for fire, especially the sacrificial fire. It reminded him over and over again that life was meant to be a *yagna*—a sacrifice. He recalled the teachings of the Gita, when Sri Krishna calls attention to the two things we must do if we are to respond to reality and live the life of a free man. These two things are: 1) *Tapasya* and 2) *Yagna*.

Several reflections came to him as he went out alone on these morning walks in the city of Lahore. He, in whose ears the song of the new Gita kept ringing, reaffirmed his resolve to serve the poor, to give sympathy and love to the broken and needy and to seek the blessings of the little ones.

The work of the "New Times" was being attended to by Jeswani. Vaswaniji used to return to Karachi after every trip. During his stay in Karachi rarely any important public meeting was held without his speech. He was often asked to preside at public meetings. When Lokamanya Tilak came to Karachi and spoke in the Khalikdina Hall, it was Vaswaniji who occupied the presidential chair. When Acharya Karve, the founder of Karve Women's University, honoured the province of Sind with a visit, it was Vaswaniji who presided at the public meeting which Acharya Karve addressed. Vaswaniji was requested to grace each important occasion with his presence and to speak some words to people who flocked eagerly to listen to him.

Members of the Sindhi community usually have a knack for making money and a lust for power. Sindhis also are known for their generosity and hospitality. But they are not men of sacrifice. So, they felt proud of Vaswaniji who had achieved prominence through tremendous sacrifice. Out of love and reverence for him they called him Sadhu Vaswani. He, of course, was far from happy at being honoured thus, for he often remarked: "I pray each day that I may be true to the title of 'Sadhu'. Sadhu Navalrai and Sadhu Hiranand were fortunate in that they were given this title posthumously and therefore could not commit any act unworthy of the title." He would then repeat the words of the philosopher Solon: "Call no man great until he is dead."

Saints have rarely trod the easy, rose-strewn path. For Sadhu Vaswani, too, there was not much smooth sailing. He had given to a Sindhi young man an amount in excess of fifty thousand rupees, considered to be exorbitant in those days, to be utilised for the "New Times". This young man betrayed the trust placed in him. When this came to Vaswaniji's attention he neither fretted nor grieved. Resigned as saints are to God's will, Vaswaniji received the bad news in the spirit of resignation and blessed him. Vaswaniji felt that he had been thereby called to the life of absolute dependence upon God and so there was no cause for regret.

Vaswaniji wondered whether he should continue to stay in Karachi. He was still debating within himself whether or not to leave the city of Karachi, when he was invited to the town of Sukkur. Seeing the hand of God in it, this pilgrim of peace quietly left Karachi for Sukkur. God's grace was upon him and so his heart was filled with peace that surpasseth all understanding.

Concerning the Pilgrim of Peace, Vaswaniji writes:

A mark of him on whom descends the grace of God is an inner calm,—a holy peace which no danger no difficulty, no disappointment can destroy.

Is he criticised? Is he slandered? The calm in his heart is undisturbed; the mirror of his mind ever shines!

Such a man seeketh to serve the world with nothing but pure love!

The Way of Wisdom

Sukkur is a quiet little town well-known because of its islet "*Sadha Bela*", the abode of sadhus. *Sadha Bela* may well be compared to an ancient *tapobana* (forest of meditation). Today Sukkur is also known for its barrage which has helped in irrigating thousands of dry acres of land across the length and breadth of Sind, turning her wastelands into smiling fields.

Vaswaniji proposed to stay in Sukkur for a short time. This little town, however, served as a starting point for his travels in the hinterland of Sind.

Several rich businessmen called *Sethias* lived in Sukkur when Vaswaniji went there. The *Sethias* vied with one another in inviting Vaswaniji to be their guest. One Sethia insisted upon being conferred this favour and Vaswaniji became his guest. The Sethia considered himself both honoured and blessed in playing host to a saint. The reception he gave to Vaswaniji would well befit a royal personage.

Within a few days, the people of Sukkur, especially the young people, felt irresistibly drawn to him. Vaswaniji wanted to leave Sukkur soon but they pressed him to stay on for some time. He agreed to do so on the condition that he be allowed to pay room rent and boarding charges. Vaswaniji had never been a burden upon any one so far and he was determined not to be one now. He chose to live a life of simplicity and austerity, within his own means.

A rich young man named Ghanshyamdas came forward with a proposition. He wanted to give on rent a spacious room with a courtyard for a monthly rent of three rupees. Another wealthy Sethia, Mukhi Kewalram, begged to be granted the favour of supplying meals to Vaswaniji, for which he would charge two and a half rupees every month Vaswaniji accepted both offers and prolonged his stay in Sukkur.

Once every month, Vaswaniji would walk from his room in Old Sukkur to the Post Office in New Sukkur, a distance of nearly three miles, to withdraw ten rupees. He had deposited his money at the Savings Account in the Post Office. He would pay five and a half rupees for room and board. He would keep the balance and use it to buy everyday sugarcane,—the cheapest fruit available. To keep his expenses within his capacity, Vaswaniji washed his clothes with his own hands. As his room did not have an attached bath, he bathed out at a comman tap at the corner of the street. Inspite of his simple living, he moved about like a *raja*—a royal being. The nobility and majesty of his person attracted the attention of all those who saw him.

The purpose of life for which Vaswaniji lived was four-fold: worship, work, compassionate service and fellowship with nature. He felt that the human being was created in order to worship and adore the Divine. Therefore, in Vaswaniji's daily programme worship was given the first and foremost place. He awoke before the early hour of the dawn to commune with the Divine and to sing the glories of God. He spent some time in contemplation and he prayed unceasingly.

He reserved sometime daily for writing work. His articles, poems, parables, and stories are so original that they cease to be out of date and have a meaning and value for all time. But a profound writer must be a deep thinker and a deep thinker must be in constant touch with the writings of other thinkers and with the latest works of scholars. He was greatly interested in the lives and sayings of saints and poets. He, therefore, devoted sometime everyday to reading books and journals published throughout the world.

He, who worships and adores the Divine, must have love for the Divine and he, who has love for God, cannot live a life of complete seclusion and solitude. For love of God and love for neighbour go hand-in-hand. Such a one mixes and mingles with people and attends to their needs and wants.

To Vaswaniji came everyday the sick in body, mind and soul, the distressed and needy and those whose hearts were troubled and sorrowful. The people of Sukkur looked upon him as a saint, a man of God. and so they unburdened their hearts to him, sought his blessings, and requested him to intervene on their behalf to the Divine power. Those that were physically sick came to him in the faith that he surely would heal them. The needy came to him in the hope that he would never send them away empty-handed. Thus Sadhu Vaswani's fame spread far and wide and he shone among men as the moon among stars.

Vaswaniji always believed in the Greek maxim: A sound mind in a sound body. "*Shariram Brahma Mandaram*—the body is a Temple of the Lord." He would quote from the Upanishads and bid people to take care of their body.

In order to maintain good health Vaswaniji would take long walks everyday. He would select a quiet nature-spot and repair there in the mornings as well as in the evenings. These walks allowed him time to commune with nature and to drink in its beauty. Silent hymns of praise would then rise from his poetic, hushed heart. He would return to his room refreshed and with renewed strength which he spent in the service of God and humanity.

Various institutions of Sukkur held meetings from time to time and requested Vaswaniji to address them. At these meetings, several young men felt drawn towards him as they listened to his words of wisdom. In Sukkur, too, as in Karachi and Calcutta, a group of young men rallied around him. They looked up to him as their leader and sought to follow him implicitly. Vaswaniji, who had always been a lover of youths, knit them together in a bond of love and directed their energies too in the service of God and humanity.

The poor and the rich, the old and the young, the able and the ailing,–all sought his company and counsel, his blessings and help. And he, who knew the joy of giving, gave to each out of the abundance of his heart. There were, no doubt, times when some came to him both to give and to receive. For even those, that gave him money to be used for his philanthropic activities, would not leave, until he had spoken to them words of love, placed his holy hand upon their heads and blessed them. Owing to his incomparably pure and selfless love, the name of this towering spiritual personality, Sadhu Vaswani, was on the lips of the residents of Sukkur.

Vaswaniji had a fascinating magnetism, all his own, born of a superb sense of service and sacrifice. To him came all men, women and children, to unburden their minds and to seek solace of the spirit by his touch of Divinity. Mothers and sisters, who generally share larger mental burden in holding the family together; came to him more frequently. Some men felt the ground slipping from under their feet; they resented it. But after they came to know more of Vaswaniji, they felt happy to see him provide the spiritual guidance to their wives and daughters. Vaswaniji devoted his time and attention to sisters in order to fill their hearts with burning devotion for God and to draw them closer to the Lotus-feet of the Lord. Women and girls, like men, found in him a worthy guide on the spiritual path.

A Temple in Sukkur had fallen into the hands of a degenerate,—he called himself a '*mahant*'. His abominable surrender to the call of the flesh was total and irrevocable. Men tried to recall him to the path of virtue. Some tried to persuade him to leave the town, but all in vain. The elders assembled, put their heads together and arrived at the decision that they should appeal to Sadhu Vaswani to solve this problem for them. "He is a man of God and surely will succeed where our efforts have failed," they thought. They met Vaswaniji and entreated him to take the necessary steps. Seeing that religion was being discredited, Vaswaniji promised to give the matter due consideration.

The following day, Vaswaniji, accompanied by a group of the leading men of Sukkur, went to the Temple. The mahant staggered at the sight of Sadhu Vaswani. Vaswaniji, who was the very picture of courtesy, politeness and humility, assured the mahant to have no fears. "Take with yourself whatever you will and as much as you will," Vaswaniji hurriedly added. The mahant hurriedly took whatever he could and in a few minutes left the Temple.

Vaswaniji then handed over the charge of the Temple to the leading men who had accompanied him. On their part, they could think of no better person than Vaswaniji to be at the head of the Temple. They placed in his hands the Temple cash–box which contained gold and silver coins and requested Vaswaniji to be in charge of the Temple. "The House of God should be in the hands of the son of God," they said as they begged of him to take care of the Temple. But he would not entertain such an idea. Therefore, the Temple was placed in charge of a trusteeship committee.

The leading people of Sukkur wondered who Vaswaniji was. He seemed to be a wonder-worker. Where their long drawn united efforts had failed, the mere presence of Vaswaniji had succeeded. To some, Vaswaniji was more than a wonder-worker. "The saint-seducing gold", as poet Robert Burns calls the yellow metal, could not seduce Vaswaniji. His fame spread in every nook and corner of Sukkur.

His following increased and people in large numbers flocked to listen to his lectures.

Once when Vaswaniji went to the Post Office to make his monthly withdrawal, a dear friend, Parsram, happened to see him. Parsram, a successful lawyer, was then on a visit to Sukkur. Parsram and Vaswaniji had known each other from their school days.

Parsram had last seen his dear friend living in high style. What was this that he beheld now? Principal Vaswani clad in coarse clothes standing in the bank as a common man and withdrawing the petty sum of ten rupees! It was simply unbelievable. Were his eyes deceiving him? To make doubly sure, Parsram went up to the figure clad in white and asked: "Are you Vaswani? How is it that I find you in this state of poverty?" Vaswaniji smiled and said: "Parsa! Do not worry about me. God in His mercy has taken me under His protection and I have become what I am now." Vaswaniji then left the bank leaving behind his dazed friend.

Parsram recovered from the effects of his shock, but he could not forget his life-long friend nor could he reconcile himself to the change he found in Vaswaniji. He soon learnt that Vaswaniji had renounced his position and was now living a simple life. Parsram knew the Vaswani family intimately. He was certain that Vaswaniji's dada and sister did not know how their dear brother was living a parsimonious life in Sukkur. He deemed it his duty to acquaint both the dada and sister of the bare facts.

A few days later, Vaswaniji received from Pahlajrai a cheque for five hundred rupees. Vaswaniji was not prepared to accept such a large amount as personal gift. At the same time, he did not want to hurt Pahlajrai's feelings. So he wrote an affectionate letter explaining that he needed his dada's blessings only and returned the cheque. His sister, Papur, also offered to send him every month an allowance of fifteen rupees, "Do accept this amount, dear dada. All that I have in my savings is yours. It is from your earnings that I have saved money. So really it all belongs to you," she wrote.

Vaswaniji had chosen holy poverty for the love of God. But it was not enough to live a life of poverty. The most precious treasure of a saint is humility. In order to develop the spirit of humility he decided to beg for food. One day, after offering a prayer that he be granted strength to overcome the feeling of shame, he set out. What a trial it must have been for him to have knocked at the door of a friend and begged for food! He himself admitted that he hesitated several times and struggled long before he could win a victory over his self. His sincerity enabled him to crush his ego. He managed somehow to mutter these words: "I have come to your door, friend, to beg for food."

"Blessed am I," replied the friend, "to have you as my guest." Had the friend read the beautiful words of Saint Kabir, it is likely he would have burst out singing:

"The Beloved is my Guest today."

Close to Sukkur is the town of Rohri. It was at one time a centre of learning. It was also famous for fakirs and holy men. This little town, which has mud-houses, was also the birth place of the poet-saints, Beydil and Bekas. The father, Beydil, has burst forth into lyrics in praise of the Beautiful, while the son, Bekas, who was a disciple of his saintly father, sang of the Gospel of the Love Divine.

The literal meaning of the word Beydil is " without heart ", while that of Bekas is, "without self." If the father had lost his heart in the Ever-Pure and Ever-Fair beyond compare, the heart of the son had perished in the flames of the fire of Love Divine and had been reduced to zero, to nothing. Both communed with the Great Mystery. Both were mystics, singers and musicians. Owing to the directness of their power of communication, these Minstrels of God had cast a spell upon the minds of people. Their songs are rich in feeling and rapturous in expression. Their anniversaries are celebrated every year with affectionate reverence by their disciples at their respective shrines in Rohri by holding 'mela's (fairs).

The year was 1920. The anniversary of Beydil was soon to be celebrated in Rohri and Vaswaniji desired to be present. He expressed this desire to the people of Sukkur. By this time they had grown so attached to him that they were loath to leave him. They pleaded, they entreated, they shed tears; but they could not succeed in restraining him. He, who had God's work to do and to spread the message of his Master, could not remain for a long time at one place. The whole of Sind had to receive his blessings and profit from his teachings. So he left Sukkur for Rohri.

Before leaving Sukkur, Vaswaniji enjoined upon the people to remember to pray to the Lord everyday and to chant His Name and also to serve the poor. He always ended by saying these words: "Bless me and may the benedictions of the Lord shine upon you!"

In Rohri, as in Sukkur, people sought to receive his blessings and tried their best to be of some service to him. They took him to Poet Beydil's tomb where the mela was in full swing. Several fakirs and holy men from neighbouring villages had assembled there to pay the homage of their hearts to the poet-saint.

Vigil was observed at night. The fakirs and singers observed it by singing the lyrics of Beydil from his "Book of Songs". Crowds of men, women and children had gathered at the tomb which was a sacred place for them. In the crowds were both Hindus and Muslims. Although Beydil was a Muslim, he had a large following among Hindus. Many Hindu women had brought their sick children to the Poet's shrine in the faith that the Poet's blessings would cure their children.

Vaswaniji kept awake the whole night and listened to Beydil's songs. He was greatly impressed by the devotion the people had for Beydil.

This visit to Rohri by Vaswaniji resulted in many life-long associations. Bhagwan Manchandia is a well-known selfless follower of Vaswaniji. It was in Rohri that Bhagwan first met Vaswaniji. He was then a high-school student. Bhagwan recounts that he was deeply thrilled when he listened to Vaswaniij's inspiring lectures.

"*Swaraj* means *Dharamraj*!" declared Vaswaniji. In Vaswaniji's words was a fire. Bhagwan listened with rapt attention to Vaswaniji's discourse in the Temple of Bhai Vasanram. Vaswaniji's words, filled with love and longing and deep devotion for the Lord, pierced Bhagwan's heart even as arrows. The very first time he saw and heard Vaswaniji, he was convinced that in time to come he would be closely linked to Vaswaniji. The longing to dedicate his life to Vaswaniji soon grew within him.

Bhagwan became a student in N. E. D. Engineering College, Karachi. He, whom Vaswaniji affectionately called Bhagwano, met Vaswaniji from time to time in Rohri, Sukkur and Karachi. Bhagwan graduated and took up an engineering job, but his heart belonged to his dada (Vaswaniji). The pull of his master steered him in the direction of service for people. In 1934, Bhagwan gave up his job and started the Mira School in Rohri and became its honorary manager. Later, in the year 1940, he opened a branch of the Mira School in Sukkur. After partition, Bhagwandas was compelled to abandon the fruits of his labour and proceed to India.

Vaswaniji stayed for some time in Rohri, where people, out of the love they bore for him, presented him several gifts. To each one of them he said: "I do not need these gifts. The best gift I need from you is the *kalam* (songs) of the Poet–saints of Rohri. Collect these *kalams* and give them to me." Accordingly several hand–written songs were collected and presented to him.

From Rohri, Vaswaniji went to Larkana. In Larkana also, he spread the message of his Master. Meetings were organised where he gave lectures. These meetings were attended both by the older generation as well as by the youth. People of Larkana are over-emotional by temperament. After listening to Vaswaniji their hearts were greatly swayed. Women removed their gold and jewelery and offered it as gift, while men paced large sums of money at his disposal to be utilised by him. He kept not a single coin or ornament for his personal use but handed over everything to the workers to be spent for various good and noble causes.

On one occasion he received a gift of three thousand rupees, which was considered to be a princely sum in those days. He handed over the entire amount to a responsible person and requested him to use the money to erect a building on a plot which he had obtained free from the Municipality. He wanted a centre to be started in this building, where aspiring souls could spend their time in meditation and contemplation, in studying scriptures and in chanting the Name Divine. People admired Vaswaniji when they saw his spirit of detachment. Worldly-minded as they were, they wondered why money held no temptation for Vaswaniji. They were amazed when they learned that he spent on himself the meagre sum of ten rupees a month only.

Wherever Vaswaniji went some youths were sure to be drawn to him to such an extent that they were prepared to link their lives with him and dedicate themselves solely to him. In Larkana, Rijhu Lahori and Shanti Shahani, two handsome youths, sought to follow in his footsteps.

Rijhu Lahori had just entered the medical profession in the year 1929, when the cholera epidemic created havoc in Larkana. He at once started a hospital where cholera patients were treated. He spent over a hundred thousand rupees for the purpose. This young man worked with unflagging zeal in the field of service but soon passed away. In recognition of his selfless service his statue was installed in Gyan Bagh in Larkana in the year 1934. Vaswaniji was invited to unveil the statue of his dear devoted disciple.

Shanti Shahani grew greatly attached to Vaswaniji and stayed in attendance whenever Vaswaniji visited Larkana. After the partition, Shanti Shahani settled down in Bombay with his family. He served as sub-editor of the Hindustan, a leading Sindhi newspaper. He passed away in Bombay in the year 1956.

From Larkana, Vaswaniji moved on to Shikarpur. It was there that Murlidhar Punjabi, a leading pleader became Vaswaniji's disciple. His income ran into thousands, but the first thing he did at morn was to pay obeisance to Guru Granth Sahib and read a few pages of this holy book. This was his worship to the Divine. He attended to his secular work only after he came out of the worship room. Vaswaniji was greatly impressed by the beautiful act of this leading lawyer.

Chellasing Dunising, one of the richest bankers of Shikarpur, reverenced Vaswaniji. Several other bankers and wealthy men considered it a privilege to be associated with Vaswaniji and to be blessed by him.

News of holiness spreads swiftly in Sind. Villagers from different parts came to Sukkur,Rohri, Larkana and Shikarpur to pay Vaswaniji their homage and receive his blessings. His name had spread to every nook and corner of the province of Sind. But he, whom people sought with such love and devotion, ever aspired for the Lotus-feet of the Lord and yearned to walk the way of wisdom, which he urged, was the little way. To quote him:

> The way is the little way. Be a little child!
>
> Practise surrender to the Lord in little things, the insignificant things of everyday life.
>
> In the practice of small things, the practice of the Divine in the midst of daily duties, is the secret of him who would truly know.
>
> Big things the Lord asketh not of you. Bring to him little things. "A leaf, a flower, a fruit, a little water,"—offered in love are by him accepted in joy. Bring to him a little flower. Offer him little acts of service and love !

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Sujansing Park, Lulla Nagar, Poona.

75. M/s. Kishore Construction Co.,
21 Connaught House, Poona-1.

76. Shri Bhagwan Datwani,
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P. H. RAMCHANDANI
(Signature of the Publisher)

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